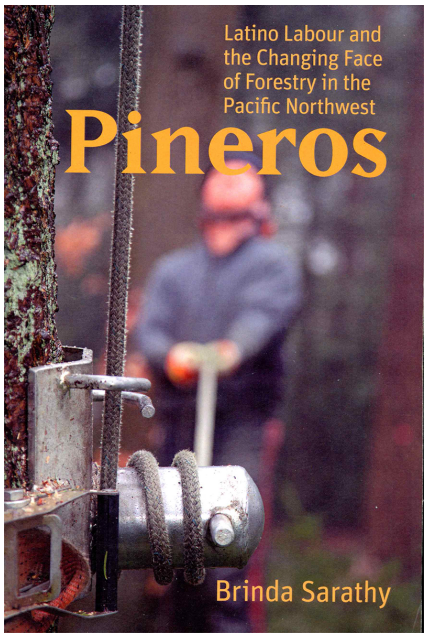
"Pineros": Interview with Bob Zybach by Brinda Sarathy
October 2, 2005, Roseburg, Oregon



Dr. Brinda Sarathy interviewed me at least twice during her Environmental Science PhD research at University of California, Berkeley. The first interview was by telephone and focused on the establishment and growth of the reforestation industry following WW II, including my personal experiences as a professional tree planter in the 1960s and as a successful reforestation contractor in the 1970s and early 1980s. The following transcript is from our second interview. In 2012, Sarathy's work was published in book form as *Pineros*. This is excerpted from the back cover:

The exploitation of Latino workers in many industries, from agriculture and meat packing to textile manufacturing and janitorial services, is well known. By contrast, pineros -- itinerant workers who form the backbone of the forest management labour force on federal land -- toil largely in obscurity . . . Brinda Sarathy investigates how the federal government came to be one of the single largest employers of Latino labour in the Pacific Northwest. She documents pinero wages, working conditions, and benefits in comparison to those of white loggers and tree planters, exposing exploitation that, she argues, is the product of an ongoing history of institutionalized racism, fragmented policy, and intra-ethnic exploitation of the West.

1. [0:00:00] US Forest Service Casual Labor Contracts (1980s)

Brinda Sarathy: The date is October 3rd, 2005 and I'm speaking with Bob Zybach at "While Away Books" in Roseburg, Oregon . . . [crosstalk while adjusting mics] . . . I would like you to tell me a little bit more about the casualization of labor. In our last interview you were talking about how this is a total casualized labor force. In terms of even, say, rural poverty and unemployment, can you just tell me a little bit more about that in terms of work in the woods?

Bob Zybach: Okay, I think by casual labor force, I mean, we're very much like tree planting started. People would go pick up available workers and maybe transport them long distances. Typically, supply their basic needs as far as a dry place to sleep and food, sometimes work gear, and provide the type of work that you could readily train somebody to do in a few hours' time.

The casual laborers were, when I started, were typically people with alcohol problems, young to middle aged white guys, some Indian guys, one black person I can remember in several years . . . I started about '66 in September, and I worked for Tom McCready until January of '70. When I was first starting as a tree planter, that's all I did for Tom. I worked on his crews exclusively.

Brinda: What was the actual physical labor of tree planting? What was the work like?

Bob: Okay [crosstalk]. The physical work of tree planting is it puts people in about the best possible physical shape you can be in. It's way more demanding that athletics, and you're doing it -- or logging -- and you're doing it typically seven or seven and a half hours a day. With our crew where we moved up and down with the elevations and seasons you might do it eight months or nine months in a year . . . So, it's like being in training camp for eight or nine months. There weren't very many people that worked completely through the season.

There's a lot of us that did, but not a whole lot. Then when we started adding other jobs to reforestation, like pre-commercial thinning, or trail building, or things like that, those are typically easier, and you could pace yourself more. When we did broadcast burning or trapping, it was more of a crew type of involvement. So, it's more back to casual labor quality of work.

Brinda: Okay. In terms of the trail building and all, were these on public land?

Bob: We did very little on public land.

Brinda: Right, you were saying that.

Bob: I did some work on the Sundance Burn in Idaho when I first started . . . They encouraged me to do more work; "they" being the federal government, because we were doing better than the contractor there. Then the contractor went bankrupt on us, and the government, even though they were the ones that asked us to do the additional work, it took two years to pay us fifty cents on the dollar. So we almost went broke by doing high quality work, and extra work . . . we did BLM contracts to start, because we could negotiate those typically, or strategically bid them. We had clusters of BLM work that we could do. The BLM or the Forest Service work was way too restrictive, way too regimented, and it was wasteful. I thought there were a lot of bad habits with it.

Brinda: When you mean restricted, what do you mean?

Bob: It would have requirements that you had to plant trees on 10-foot centers. It would give you low quality seedlings and say, all the root hairs had to be pointed down. They would have somebody with a two-year degree that would go through and dig root hairs, and they would tell you if your root hairs were up or down. Then you'd try to explain geotropism to them, and they wouldn't understand. Then they would dock your pay. They'd say okay, we found 88% good root hairs, or placements so we're giving you 88% pay.

Brinda: Okay, based on a few samples.

Bob: Well this was a statistically valid sample, but the methodology was not statistically valid because they had kids with no experience out there determining quality levels on something that they: one, couldn't have met themselves; but two, it was almost irrelevant. There'd be a J-root study, and they'd say, "then you get surface roots up from J-roots" and we'd say okay. Except we'd planted millions of trees over tens of thousands of acres, and we'd never seen that happen once. Other than that, is that really worth spending a lot of time and effort, slowing us down to dock our pay to give us a problem that doesn't exist and then make us pay for it? So if we had a $2500 job and we only got 90% pay we'd be docked $250. That's what I mean by too restrictive it was just regulated to . . . we could do better work for private industry for about 1/3 the price. So for three or four hundred dollars an acre we could go out and do high quality reforestation work for Georgia Pacific or Weyerhaeuser and then the government would cost 1000 or 1200 dollars for a lesser quality job.

Brinda: As a contractor, would it not be in your best interest to go for the higher pay?

Bob: Well, you lose efficiency, and then you're playing a game with casual labor people. People that would say I can move 20 people into the Rockies, two states away for 32 days and move back because they were running Mexican laborers or because . . . so the contractor specs would be written to . . . There were odd things. There would be a district where somebody says we don't want to hire extra manpower during this period of time, so we're gonna use all of our people that are available and take three months to do a project. Another district would say, we've got such a window of opportunity between the snow, we're gonna hire extra manpower and we're gonna do it in a week. But we're not gonna tell you which days those weeks are in, they could spread over a three-week period, we're gonna wait for ideal conditions. So we've got a crew sitting on standby, which if they're all here illegally that's like their tough luck. If they're all here legally it's like your tough luck, they'll just leave.

It was more important to have steady work that was productive. You felt like you were doing a job rather than meeting a regulation and then we could make a profit. We got paid for what we did, so if we wanted to make more money we just worked harder. The standards we had were based on, interestingly enough, on my quality standard. My quality standards were the common factor through whoever we bid on, and it met all of their quality standards. What I established for our crew as far as Weyerhaeuser, Georgia Pacific, or Boise Cascade or any of the private land owners . . . now I worked for Indian lands too, Makah, Quinault, and we'd occasionally fill in if we got snowed out or caught between contracts, which occasionally would happen, I'd just call up somebody like John Foster and maybe put a crew on one of his jobs for a week or two.

Brinda: Okay, and he was on Federal lands primarily, right?

Bob: Yeah, quite a bit, but he had private lands, and he did tree farms, Christmas tree farms, so he did a wide variety. I focused almost entirely on private tree farms which I did mostly as a favor to the neighbors because I could get cut-rate trees. I'd put our crews in cheap, and they would be lucky if I ever broke even on them, but they kept the crews going during down times. So we never had a down time, we worked year-round I think, for about an eight-year period at one point -- which we were the first crew to work year-round, and then once we did it, it was pretty easy to keep everybody going.

Brinda: Would you say a big part of that ability to work year-round was working on private versus public lands?

Bob: Yes.

Brinda: Could you say a little more about that and why that was?

Bob: Private lands wanted the job done cheap; they didn't want it done to regulation . . . If you said, okay, I was the contractor on a private, I wasn't just some person putting my hat in the ring, I'd say, "we will be here in February and we will complete your job by March 1st."

Brinda: That's what you would say?

Bob: Yeah. For Georgia Pacific, they'd say, "okay, you've got two million trees, can you get it done by April 15?" I'd say, "If we can start by November 15, we can." We went about 20 years and never were late on anything. We had five replants; I called three of them. Other crews would have, sometimes several replants in a day, certainly in a week or in a month's time, that was real normal. Eight years without a [work] day off, people worked . . . and we worked Christmas day and Sundays sometimes.

Brinda: It was primarily what? Replanting work?

Bob: Replanting is when you have planted it and then you've got to replant it. But people do say like that all the time: it's "planting."

Brinda: It's "planting" -- okay.

2. [0:10:50] The Hoedads: Contract Crews & Co-ops

Bob: We did very little replanting. There's two kinds of replanting. One, you do a crappy job of planting, so you've gotta go through and replant in order to get paid and meet job specs, and another kind is you go through and maybe you do a fine job but it's bad nursery stock or rabbits come in or deer come in and they kill off a good share of the seedlings and then you're replanting in areas that have been planted before. When I talked about the Hoedads, we replanted there because it was really crappy work.

Brinda: Right, because they had spaced too . . .

Bob: They'd put tons of trees along the roads and cut banks where it was easy to plant -- apparently, they didn't have an inspector. They had not gone off into the brushy areas; there was nothing. There wasn't any evidence, there was just animal signs. It was what cut corners is, literally, what you do. They hadn't counted reprod.

Brinda: What's reprod?

Bob: Reprod is natural reproduction. You would be in an area and maybe it'd have hemlock and true fir, and Douglas fir, and cedar. Sometimes even they would count alder and things like that; not often.

Brinda: From what it sounds like in my reading, the main groups of the players were contract crews and the co-op crews.

Bob: Yes, for the bulk of the time the industry was doing well, it was that the co-op crews followed the contract crews.

Brinda: They followed the contract crews, okay.

Bob: Yeah, and then you were saying it's best . . . how they were the ones who invented busheling or something?

Brinda: They talked about that they did the quality control, at least in the book, and how they shifted the nature of the game toward being paid by the hour and not stashing trees. Again, based on this one source.

Bob: Yep. They were good at self-promotion. Their main thing was that they had a big, huge business advantage because they didn't pay compensation insurance and quite often, they didn't pay social security or unemployment. But most of these city kids, the quality of their work and their work ethic wasn't very good. But they relied heavily on federal minimum dollar amounts. The federal government says, "you have to pay this much," so they had to bid at those rates. On federal bids another advantage is you had to have a deposit, so they bought land, they had a wealthy person start them up. They used that land to get higher price jobs, ones I couldn't get because I didn't have good enough economic circumstances to bond these; they did. Because they had a ready group of casual laborers, hippie co-operative members, they could get a fair number of people out into a place. They used the federal minimum wage guidelines, which were real high; they helped take them up, they lobbied for that. They were really good politically; they lobbied the state and the Feds for all kinds of advantages.

Brinda: The private land owners didn't have to pay a federal minimum wage?

Bob: Oh, the private land owners had to pay a lot higher than that. Typically, until after everything crashed, then this became a buyer's market. People were busheling and making more than $100 a day in the mid-'50s if they were cutting timber.

Brinda: If they were cutting timber?

Bob: Cutting timber. If they were planting trees at that time, they might make, in the mid-'50s, $25 a day. But the minimum wage was $10 a day . . . It would depend on the work forces. A lot of times they'd make $2 an hour, so like say $15 or $16, but that was still pretty good, especially for guys . . . there'd be a lot of high school kids, just out of high school that would work on local jobs because of the Tillamook Burn, or in local communities. The Forest Service jobs and the ones requiring contractors and better business practices were Bob Snow and Tom McCready and those people.

Brinda: Yeah. Do you know when the Forest Service started contracting out this work? Was it ever in-house when they built the Forest Service or the BLM?

Bob: That's a good question. It used to be in-house for Weyerhaeuser and some of the others, and they used union crews and that was to our advantage because we were way more efficient than the union crews. They ate up way more money than us, mostly in benefits and things, so it made us look good. The Forest Service, that's a good question.

3. [0:15:37] Union Labor & Compensation Insurance

Brinda: So just to back up to the union crews with Weyerhaeuser. Did they always use in-house, were all their crews unionized?

Bob: For, I think significant periods of time they were, where they had to. While I was working with Weyerhaeuser a lot they had to run at least one token union crew. All the union guys that went to plant trees, and they hated it because it's really hard work and the crew was miserable, and they weren't very good at it; we made 'em look bad. There was lot of conflict between loggers and tree planters early on because they saw us as hippies. But then when they'd try to arm wrestle in the bars or things like that or tried to work on our crews, they saw us as good workers. There's a huge difference, because one, they don't want you around the town or their daughters or the bar or wherever they're at; and they don't want to look at you.

Brinda: The loggers?

Bob: Yeah. The other one is, they'll buy you a beer and they're glad to see you. If there's respect, and that took a while to develop. Then it's kinda dissolved like you've been talking about; goes back to the casual labor arc which is the one we're still in now.

Brinda: I know you planted for Georgia Pacific for a long time, but I don't know about Weyerhaeuser. So these in-house employees at Weyerhaeuser were usually loggers, right?

Bob: Or sawmill workers.

Brinda: So they nominally went out to try and plant trees but couldn't really do it.

Bob: They thought they could.

Brinda: They thought they could but then you guys came in is that . . .?

Bob: Yeah, they ran time studies on us and everything else, and they gradually shifted away from the union crews. The union allowed it to happen because they really didn't have good support. The union workers wanted logging jobs which are hydraulics and a lot of sawmill jobs which is under roofs. But the only real thing that compared to what we're doing would be maybe, choker setters or timber fallers, where they're out there, they're in the rain, they're working.

Brinda: They also get paid less right, choker setters?

Bob: Choker setters get paid less but the timber fallers get paid at the top. They work typically, a shorter day. We did when we had saw jobs to do, we'd just pace ourselves to work one hour less a day.

Brinda: In your experience as a contractor, did you ever come across any attempt among the workers to sort of organize against the contractors, or was there a move for we want higher wages, we want to be recognized on par with loggers, this high skill work. Or we want to be unionized because there's a lot of history on loggers unionizing right?

Bob: Well, to some degree. My great-grandparents owned a sawmill. The Wobblies struck against that around World War I or a little before. You're right, the Pacific Northwest, Oregon and Washington, I think were the two most unionized states this side of the Mississippi. In the western United States, and a lot of that had to do with the lumber industry. A lot of it had to do with the industrial lumber industry, and a lot of it had to do with the Wobblies, just getting them unionized.

This was especially a problem in the cedar mills because people would routinely be missing parts of their fingers because these knives would come down. If you lose enough fingers, then you lose your job. You don't have any kind of social welfare to fall back on and there was other problems. They were working 13 and 14-year-old kids in the mills and logging the sites. I know a lot of people that started logging when they're 12 or 14. My great uncle started at that age.

So that was kind of a residual thing, and then in the 50s and 60s there started being a lot of Gyppo loggers and Gyppo sawmill owners and those are independent, family operated, typically three or five or seven employees. They'd buy patches of timber, and they'd sell it, and they would be, of course, non-union, non-benefits, sometimes under the table. But the opportunity would be there to make a lot more money. But then the steady work wasn't there, and the benefits weren't there, so the actual movement would be away from unionization. In my business I actually approached union and tried to unionize my workers, and the union was so suspicious of that approach from me, as an employer, that they backed away from us.

Brinda: Who did?

Bob: The union. We had meetings at my house, and we had meetings with my crew and things.

Brinda: You tried to unionize your workers as an employer, that's very interesting.

Bob: Yeah, well our next step was we had health insurance, and we had compensation insurance, but there were people like Dean Pihlstrom that had these Salmon River Firefighters or the Hoedad's that didn't have compensation insurance that were really gypping the workers. If we didn't have benefits and good wages, it was all going to turn into a casual labor industry done by Mexicans. The idea was to get local kids' meaningful employment with meaningful benefits and to create, as we were fully conscious of doing it, an industry with stability that kids would want to come into. Learn the skills; it takes several years to become a pretty decent tree planter, or it takes several months to develop some pretty bad habits you can't hardly ever break. Chainsaw work is the same thing: several years. To do those basic types of jobs really effectively, particularly within a crew concept, pace yourself accordingly, not be injured, keep working through the year -- and still usually maintain pretty heavy drinking and smoking habits -- requires younger people, in good shape with a good work ethic and good physical capabilities.

Brinda: I'm finding this thing about unionization fascinating, that you attempted that. What union did you approach?

Bob: I've probably got the records on it. Let me think. It would be a labor union, probably AFL-CIO or affiliate I would guess. We weren't . . .

Brinda: And they didn't want anything to do with it?

Bob: They kinda did, but they were very suspicious of "why is a business owner . . .", but the type of business ownership we had was employee stock ownership plan, ESOP. Then the way I ran my business was I had only a percentage of work they did, so I wasn't really in it for a giant income like most of my competitors were. It was perfectly legitimate to be in business to make a profit. I was in business to create a steady, meaningful, good paying employment for me and to use that as a way to segue into some kind of retirement income which I thought would happen in my mid to late 30s. I anticipated owning a tree farm and marketing trees, so I had a real stable work crew, lots of neighbors, some relatives so, legitimately, what was good for them, was good for me.

Brinda: How were you able to then compete with the other contractor's crews if you were providing health benefits and such for your employees?

Bob: We were a lot more efficient**.** We produced a lot more per day so our gross income per man day or per person working . . . Weyerhaeuser used us as a standard, you could ask other people. I don't know anybody who was more efficient that way. So even though our bid price would be lower, because our production was so much higher our gross income per man day was greater and that allowed me to pay more benefits and higher wages. Then I had zero profit margin, I just was not making much of a profit, we never anticipated having much of a profit. In fact, we would have employee bonuses if there was any profit left over to divvy it up that way.

Brinda: In some senses, you almost were almost like a co-op, but you provided benefits and the worker's compensation.

Bob: We were like a co-op except that we followed the law. The co-ops were, I don't care what they say, they were designed to circumvent the law. There were not cooperative logging businesses, there were not cooperative sawmill businesses, there's not cooperative brush picking businesses, there's not cooperative strawberry picking businesses; why did the Hoedad's have to have a worker's cooperative? That was a way to provide casual labor and that's like collusion basically. We'll all not pay taxes, and we'll create smoke screens and lobby and hire good lawyers. It was an effective strategy for a lot of years.

Brinda: But they finally had to give in and pay . . .?

Bob: Yeah, they went out into the real world and pretty much faded away, I don't know what happened to them. They had pretty good . . . I think they had like 300 employees at a time, so at one point they had to be generating, you

would think, $30,000 on a good day. Or you would think $100,000 or $200,000 on the good week to maintain that type of work force. So they were a pretty big business. They defined what the federal standards would be, and then they made those federal standards meet their particular and peculiar combination of attributes, and then they took their pick of the contracts basically, for a lot of years. People like Jerry Rust**,** and people like that, that's another reason I just stopped. I went, "To hell with it," they can all do that stuff, I don't want to be playing business games. You're either getting overpaid or underpaid from my perspective and that was stressful. I didn't want to make more money than I earned, and I definitely didn't want to keep working for the government and being paid less money and waiting two years on what I earned.

Brinda: In terms of the stuff you were doing on private land, how has that changed over the years and why? I take it you're no longer in tree planting. How did that come about?

Bob: It's basically two ways. In the 80s, in the addition to some of the environmental laws that I was mentioning were kinda debilitating in cost like, there was also a housing depression. There wasn't a demand for products. There was a lot of tree planting going on in Canada and there were some crews that went up there, but then you've got international business problems, and I didn't even like doing interstate too much. They kinda hung on up there. There was a real marked drop-back in federal logging that almost ended; by the early '90s it was gone, but it was like diminishing rapidly. The private lands kinda heated things up in the 80's, but a lot of them then went bankrupt or held back on the reforestation or minimalized their investment because there was such a thin margin to keep things going. A lot of them sold their lands. People like Aaron Jones couldn't buy federal timber, so he bought 120,000 acres of timberland.

Brinda: <u>The</u> Aaron Jones.

Bob: He owns Seneca Sawmill out of Eugene, so whoever's been putting money into reforestation on that. Some people think it's him, he's brand new, he wants to keep cost to a minimum. Then there's these always available, essentially, initially Hoedad crews, they don't have federal work, and they're used to working by the hour and their prices sound cheap compared to my prices. They'll say, "oh we can do that for 15 an hour," then they'd say, "how much for me," I'd say, "I pay my guys from 28 an hour," and they'd say, "wow, why is it so much more expensive with you?" "Well we're doing three times more work, it's cheaper with us." But they've gotta go through the learning curve. They've gotta answer to their people. On the surface it just doesn't look right to charge twice as much to . . . because we're used to busheling, by the acre, by the thousand. There the prices was a way they couldn't compete.

They got a lot of the industry to go over to hourly contracts under the guise that it was cheaper, but the reality was it was easier to sell. "Look at this cut rate we're getting; oh we're getting a special deal." A lot of it because those people had to go legal, and they got brand new rates at 100%. Well those of us who had been in the industry for a while, typically were paying well above 100% because our competitors were not insured and they were part of the "Oregon Plan" so when they get hurt, the worker got insured and it was us that was paying that benefit to the Hoedad's and others. That's one of the reasons . . .

Brinda: You'll have to slow down here and back up and explain that.

Bob: Oh okay. In the Oregon Plan, there's no worker that's going to get hurt on a job.

Brinda: The Oregon Health Plan?

Bob: The Oregon compensation insurance.

Brinda: Oregon Comp. Oh okay.

Bob: It was called the Oregon Plan at the time. So if you had a bunch of Hoedads out there and they weren't paying compensation or had 12 Mexicans and they're paying compensation on three Jose's and whoever's hurt is "Jose." Those people, when they get hurt and they go to the hospital they're covered even though their employer’s not doing

it. The Hoedad's big shifty move was that they're all independent contractors, which was a crock. But it kept them from having to pay comp, so they go in there as an independent contractor that was injured on the job. And people like me had to pay a premium to cover uninsured workers.

Brinda: Okay. ‘Cause just the rates just go up as there's . . .?

Bob: Yep. And then there's a high injury rate.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: The video I'll get you -- we did for them shows the different types of job descriptions and it shows people actually doing them. But the idea was we gotta show that a lot of these jobs are a lot safer than logging ‘cause we were paying loggers' rates.

Brinda: Oh, wow. Wow. That's not --

Bob: So, and that was debilitating.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: You can go to Washington state, and it would just be a fraction. You could go to Idaho and it'd just be a fraction. Oregon was just really high.

Brinda: Did that change, the loggers . . . I mean were you always paying loggers rates?

Bob: Yeah. I was intervening on behalf of my business and ARC [Associated Reforestation Contractors] and that was it. We got variable rates.

Brinda: You did.

Bob: And I think they still have variable rates. It made it, for those of us who that were legit, it was making us more competitive. It lowered our overall premiums.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: The other thing we were trying to do, around the same time as unionizing, is expose the noncompliant contractors. That's what they were called.

Brinda: The noncompliant contractors?

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: And so that would include both co-ops as well as contractors who didn't pay workers comp?

Bob: Noncomplying. They were not following the law. They were circumventing the law. The Hoedads, they were being self-righteous about it, but it doesn't matter. It was unethical.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: And the Mexicans and the Russians were being clear as a bell. It was like okay; here's how you can compete; here's where you get another advantage.

4. [0:32:45] Industrial Reforestation Contracts

Brinda: Okay. So those work forces eventually moved on to the private land and displaced your work force?

Bob: Yes. Yes, ‘cause those private lands had less and less need, and there's more and more surplus, and there was more and more . . .

Brinda: They had less and less need why?

Bob: Because of the housing market and that. They weren't logging. Then they started doing export and then they started like changing ownerships. The ownership of a Weyerhaeuser or a Publishers, is pretty well dedicated to, or Georgia Pacific, to getting that next profit from a plant . . . They want it, it's a good investment. Especially Publishers, they kind of sold themselves over much; they invested a lot . . . So a lot of crews became dependent, even Pihlstrom and the others stopped doing federal work and they started doing Publishers.

Brinda: Publishers is a company?

Bob: Yes, it puts out the *Los Angeles Times* . . . They came up to Oregon, and they bought a lot of small land ownerships in the 60s and 70s. Their big idea was to go through all these fields, and all these alder stands, and all these logged off lands, because there was such a high site. That means they grow timber real well.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And plant trees. And that way they would transfer wealth down forty or fifty years. They'd have plenty of fiber for their newspapers and they would take the surplus wealth from the 70s and 80s and send it on to the next century in growing timber. In fact, not only send out wealth but expand our wealth. But they were a little bit too optimistic. They didn't take into account animals. Animal damage to seedling numbers. And so their investments became greater, they were paying too much money for land, and ultimately it just didn't pencil out the way they . . . They could see after about ten years like, whoops!

Brinda: So they said that in terms of what, mortality of the seedlings or?

Bob: I think that was part of it. Maintenance of the seedlings, risk, the brush, animals, fire. But mostly I think it's the very real cost of long-term investments. Tying up a lot of capital for forty years. And who could perceive the iPad five years ago?

Brinda: Right.

Bob: So it's bad decision making. They kept assuming that there would be more and more demand for wood products and the value would keep escalating. And then the housing market of the 80s kind of like took those realities.

Brinda: So what's happened on those private lands now, in terms of forest management?

Bob: A lot of them were abandoned in the 80s and that. And have developed wonderful stands of second growth trees that are now merchantable. And I think that's going to be one of the interesting things that hopefully research points to, is most of those lands are doing fabulously. If you compare the money spent on those lands, compared to the money spent on restoration -- any you have your associate studying that -- hopefully you can put your data together in such a way that there can be a comparison.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: Because there's a real astronomic disparity that I'm going to predict between the two. I think you're going to find out that reforestation expenses, even absurd levels like Publishers' or the Forest Service, ultimately pencil out. Especially if you look at them as a cost of doing business. But the restoration stuff, I think you're going to find is pretty nebulous.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: A lot of that work seemed to be designed by graduate students. No offense! [Laughter]

Brinda: With no on-the-ground experience. No, that's fine.

Bob: Very nice in theory, but then there's this *Aplodontia rufa* [“mountain beaver” or “boomer”] that goes through and eats all the seedlings, and so much for plan A, then what?

Brinda: Right. Well okay, in terms of just new ideas about what's happening on private land that's now ready to be harvested? It's ready to be harvested, but is there a demand for it to be harvested?

Bob: Oddly enough, the demand has shifted because of some of these different market factors and policies we're discussing. Where the big diameter trees that used to get the premium dollar are lesser value, than small diameter trees that can be readily chipped or peeled or knocked into two by fours. The demand for small diameter logs is I think the best it's been in like a hundred years. More than a hundred years. It used to be a huge demand because of all the . . . They called them "tie mills" for the railroad ties, before they got creosote online. Huge sawmill industry for those small second growth trees. But now they're in demand more for construction materials. It's not railroad ties anymore.

Brinda: So would you say there's still a lot of cutting taking place on private lands in the Northwest?

Bob: Define “a lot.” I mean, compared to the past times?

Brinda: I guess in terms of providing employment for others . . .

Bob: Way down, that's way down.

Brinda: And in terms of if those lands are going to be cut, does that mean it's going to be replanted? I'm assuming . . .

Bob: Well they have to be replanted by law.

Brinda: By law, right?

Bob: Right. Now the cuts . . . There's a lot less employment because there's been a lot of technical development in just the last 20 or 30 years. So now you've got all these machines that can go in and do the work of two or three guys.

Brinda: Like feller bunchers going . . .

Bob: Feller bunchers exactly. They couldn't operate on these hillsides before, so we had to all do that by man power. So now you've got one guy on a feller buncher machine, and you've got the manufacturer, and the maintenance, and the mechanic, and all those guys instead of four cutters and somebody running a skidder and somebody running a cat. But you still have to chop down those trees so then it'd be a two-part . . . You'd have five or six people doing what one or two do now. And then they’re thinning a lot of these stands off, you have this big argument for thinning, so there's no need for tree planting there.

You can get figures real easily from the IFA nursery and from D.L. Phipps, Oregon Department of Forestry nursery. And those records are just outstanding. I haven't looked at them for a couple decades, but they will tell you what the trends are.

Brinda: Okay, on private lands as well?

Bob: Yes, specifically on private lands. IFA, they're not the only private nursery, but they've got a handle on the private nursery industry. And the state of Oregon is responsible for state lands and private lands.

Brinda: Okay.

5. [0:39:28] "Restoration" vs. Restoration

Bob: So the feds, they used to have their own nurseries, when they were doing stuff like that, mostly they shut them down. Mostly their logging and reforestation work is . . . "restoration."

Brinda: Okay so yeah, when you were saying that the restoration work, the cost of it . . . You said, "Restoration costs are pretty nebulous."

Bob: Well the work is nebulous.

Brinda: The work.

Bob: The cost is almost all . . .

Brinda: High.

Bob: Yeah, generated by tax revenues.

Brinda: Okay, right.

Bob: It's a money sink; whereas reforestation work, theoretically, should be a cost of doing business. So if you're going to log those trees off, you better plant something back for the next generation. Rather than, jeez you've got all this bare dirt, what do we want to do? Raise goats, plant trees, no. The decision is already made. You're going to log in Oregon, you're required to plant. I think that if Publishers had done their math that way, they might still be in business. "This is a great investment," they've talked themselves into it. It doesn't pencil out very well that way.

So if you're looking at restoration work, typically, what is it? Typically, decommissioned roads, putting structure in creeks, moving rocks around, hand pulling weeds . . . I'm sure it all feels good at the end of the day but it's like leaf raking. And it's busy work. It's like where is the economic benefit to that?

Brinda: Right.

Bob: I mean from a long-term resource perspective. I'm sure there's economic benefit, maybe to the community or the workers out there doing it. But the odd thing that happened, when this period started where they started laying off all the loggers and the sawmill workers and reforestation workers, they started getting a lot of federal money and they started hiring people like out of work commercial fishermen.

Brinda: So "they" would be the federal government?

Bob: Yeah. And they'd give them $7.00 an hour jobs doing what we could do way better, way cheaper. Not that cheap an hour. For four days a week, then they'd teach them data entry for one day a week. It's like job retraining.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: But it was crazy. It's like why are you putting loggers and reforestation workers out of work, so you got a training ground for . . . I'm gonna be mean again . . . graduate students and displaced fishermen. But that's what it was. It was typically a college professor, I can even name one of them who got lots and lots of money from the federal government. and she just set up these employee training things, and she'd never . . . Zero ability. She'd never had employees.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: I don't know if she'd ever had a budget. And here she is training people, theoretically, with lots of government money, how to be competitive contractors.

Brinda: In restoration?

Bob: They call it restoration instead of reforestation, but most of the legitimate jobs it came up with were logging or reforestation jobs that we've done either routinely or avoided routinely.

Brinda: Okay so what then, happened to your workforce? Because there was a huge number of workers in logging that lost their jobs, as well as reforestation, right?

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: So did they go into these retraining programs?

Bob: My crews . . . We could see the end coming for about six months roughly. And we tried some desperate measure cuts and everything. But then it was just abrupt, okay there's no more work. There was enough for five or six of us to try and keep paying debts and hopefully in a year or two this finally ends. We went and toughed out about three or four bad economic years, well, until it got ridiculous. And we just found some way to keep it going . . . So a lot of my workers joined other crews.

Brinda: What kind of crews?

Bob: Similar crews that were already cutting their wages and had different kinds of inefficiencies, like the three Jose's had going, or McCready's . . . There were some smaller crews that traveled around more, so that was their advantage. So doing the same types of work, but it was kind of like . . . I think a lot of people who worked for me had a big advantage because they'd been doing it for a lot of years, and I think they were really well trained. And so they were able to step into other crew situations and sparkle just from the beginning. So they'd get good wages, but good wages wasn't 14 an hour anymore, it was like 7.75 or something. So they'd take huge cuts in pay.

Brinda: Wow. So at that point . . . This is what, the mid-80s? Early to mid-90s?

Bob: Yeah, let's see. I think the mid to late 80s . . . That's where things got pretty desperate.

Brinda: And at that point, there was still work in planting?

Bob: Yeah, but it was way down. People had to work on Christmas tree farms to work out through the rest of the year. There was way less pre-commercial thinning. The planting pay was just a lot worse. Way less chemical application, the feds had cut it off entirely, and so on.

Brinda: And so now, the crews, what do you call these crews who are out there? Are they restoration crews, because you're right, they're not doing planting in the traditional sense.

Bob: I would say they're . . .

Brinda: They're doing a lot of thinning, they're doing the piling, the burning.

Bob: Yeah, hand piling. A lot of busy work. I'd think restoration crews would be a pretty reasonable thing for them. I think there are still reforestation crews around . . . But I think they . . . And there is where [John] Foster and [Tom] McCready would have a better handle on that than me. We reactivated Phoenix Reforestation, for example, but we're focusing almost entirely on a handful of people doing oak savanna restoration.

Brinda: So you're also doing restoration work now?

Bob: Yes.

Brinda: And is that on public lands or?

Bob: Private.

Brinda: Private lands?

Bob: Yeah. I am going to be putting out a bid for public land here in the next several days, though [crosstalk 00:45:45]. Well, I don't know. Sometimes you get what you want, that's the plan.

Brinda: Right, so what do you think of the work you're doing now? Do you see that as busy work?

Bob: Oh no. I'm adverse to busy work. If I see something as busy work, then I avoid it. There's a reason that I haven't necessarily done well economically through a lot of years. [Laughs]

Brinda: Clarify for me then, because before . . .

Bob: Busy work?

Brinda: . . . when, well not busy work but you said restoration now is shifting around . . . I mean, correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding what you were saying is it's leaf raking, et cetera, et cetera.

Bob: Right, I've just got no interest in that. What we used to do a lot, more than other crews, they would go from conifer to conifer. So they'd log Douglas fir and then they'd plant Douglas fir.

Brinda: Correct.

Bob: And Douglas fir's main competitive around other trees, as it just kills everything. It just shades it all out. So you've got mushrooms, so if you log it real clean, there's really not much site prep. And it depends on, you can log a whole tree, whole tree type logging, or helicopter logging take the tops and limbs off. Or you can leave that stuff around, and you have to burn it, but the treatments are pretty straight forward. It's not like rocket science; it's like a pretty straight forward thing.

What we did was a "conversion" reforestation. We went from an 1868 wildfire that killed most the timber. Reprod was the second growth. Most of the second growth was logged off, came up into alder. The trees that were left behind were limby, there were also snags left behind, and we cut the alder as much as we could, we sent it in for chips and we sprayed it with herbicide, then we burned it, then we planted the Douglas fir. So we were dealing with a lot of sprouting trees and shrubs, a lot of understory, because the alder is deciduous. And so we were going from alder to Douglas fir.

And we got a lot of heat in the press from the environmentalists because they were saying, oh look we're creating tree farms. And we were actually going back to the original conifer pattern that had been there 400 years ago.

Brinda: And this is ultimately for commercial use?

Bob: Yes. It was large land owners, Georgia Pacific, Publishers, Weyerhaeuser. That was kind of what we focused on because we could do it all. We could cut, spray, fire trail, burn, plant, replant, animal trap. Anything that was needed, we had trained crews of full-time professionals that could go in and do the job it expects. And no problems. Schedule the work, and we'd been doing it for decades.

Brinda: Okay, with the ultimate goal of having a resource to harvest and start the cycle again.

Bob: Right, yeah. We were growing timber. Now we are going to areas that are covered with timber, we're cutting it away and we're saying, it's the oak savanna, the forbs and the bluebird habitat, and the endangered butterfly habitat. That's endangered. We've got plenty of timber out there. Let's get these firs out of the way. Now they are the weeds. And let's restore oak savanna type habitats. So that's kind of what we're working on now. Let's restore traditional type burning practices that the Indians did two and three hundred years ago, to meet modern management objectives.

Brinda: Okay so basically, you sort of meet a change in objective.

Bob: Yes.

Brinda: Okay. And how do you feel about that?

Bob: I think I'm underpaid, like everybody. Not enough time off, not enough benefits, not enough pay.

Brinda: But the work is on private land. And the owners are saying, to oak savanna?

Bob: Yeah.

Brinda: They are saying that, are they? I'm just a little confused.

Bob: Okay, the private land owners, there's only about one percent of land left in that condition that can be restored. Almost all of it's on private land. So if the private people don't do it, then nobody can. But I'm also going with proposals to the Forest Service and the BLM, where they've had these massive, catastrophic fires. My PhD is in catastrophic fire, and my training is in reforestation. And so I'm putting out different kinds of prescriptions that acknowledge the need for a more diverse wildlife habitat in the landscape but also insists on an understanding that seems to have been entirely missed. These are management problems. They need people out there doing the work to create these conditions. It's not a benign neglect "non-declining, even flow, naturally functioning ecosystem."

And that's what they've been arguing: first, on the spotted owl, and now they're arguing that on oak savanna. That they can kind of restore "natural functions," then they get a little vague real quick. And by doing that, that then the thing will continue with recycling carbon and then there'll be nutrients in a "non-declining, even flow, naturally functioning" fashion.

Brinda: Where does the funding come from?

Bob: The funding to do that kind of stuff?

Brinda: Right. For your . . .

Bob: Taxes . . . Oh, for mine? Mine's private. So it comes from . . . 40 acres I just designed, 22 acres is designated for one acre home sides, residential home sides, because they can hold habitats sufficient for species with limited range. And 18 acres is designed as a hundred-year outdoor school room for local students. So how do you get 40 acres into a way that pays for itself and can be managed through time? So those are the questions I've got. That's what keeps it interesting.

Brinda: And the private land owner too, are they developing their land?

Bob: In this particular project, that's the idea. They'll develop 22 acres as residential, using native plants, and native animals, and 18 acres will be developed as an oak savanna restoration project; go back and create an earlier tradition.

Brinda: But that would be part of a communal land [crosstalk 00:51:58].

Bob: Part of the city of Corvallis . . . Yep. Open space in the city of Corvallis. So I'm planning an urban, privately owned property, with residential development with a long-term study, and not for recreation.

Brinda: And so is that becoming a public easement?

Bob: Well that would probably be most likely. Some kind of conservation easement that would be going to a non-profit. Something of that nature.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative). So what's happening, would you say a trend that's happening is that some smaller private land owners who perhaps had timber land, are now developing that. And so rather than planting for timber, it's okay, let's do the restoration thing but you also have development because it's more profitable for them?

Bob: Yeah. A lot of them are buying into the idea, and there's a lot of federal programs right now which allows them to do it. They'll get federal cost share to create all of that habitat. But there's no follow up. There's no monitoring, there's no maintenance. And so my fear is it will be like, that's what I'm calling leaf raking. It's like, you can do all that work, and then if you don't maintain it, the leaves fall down and look what's happened to them. Leaf raking.

Brinda: Right, I mean you studied that, like a lot of these oak savannas consistently manage to be oak savanna with the right practices.

Bob: Yeah. And so that's what we're trying to get going. We're trying to get burning back in the community; we're going to have difficulties doing that, so it's educational, it's instructive, but we're also on the cutting edge. We're not reflecting a market trend. We're reflecting a potential management direction and we're highlighting the costs and benefits of that direction. And working with school kids to do that work. So I'm trying to use my degree as an educator.

6. [0:53:54] "Conservation" vs. Conservation & Jabberwocky

Brinda: Okay, sure. And just your reflections on then, going from planting and sort of a fairly vibrant timber-based economy, and resource-based economy to something that's let's say, more conservation oriented, restoration of the landscape. Economically. Is the restoration economy a sustainable economy?

Bob: If we don't call it conservation, it isn't.

Brinda: If you don't call it . . . Okay.

Bob: They're starting to call themselves conservationists.

Brinda: Who is they?

Bob: The preservation community, which, my attitude has shifted on who those people are and why are they doing these things. But when they start calling themselves conservationists, they are misrepresenting themselves. And misrepresenting themselves is like Hoedads claiming themselves as "quality control." It's like, other than the fact it's not true, it sounds good. So it's a promotional thing that they've been using consciously. Conservationists go back to Pinchot a hundred years ago, and it's "wise use." It's like, first and foremost, the local industries. Well these people aren't reflecting that philosophy by any shape. Theirs is an anti-logging philosophy fairly consistently.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: So the idea is to not log riparian zones, let the conifers somehow create salmon, not log the burned-off lands, have the snags be wildlife habitat and develop soil structure. And so to marginalize or even eliminate the timber industry. I think that's pretty fair. However, we're all living in wood houses, we're using wood bookcases, books are wood products, so is newspaper, toilet paper, paper bags. We're using wood furniture, so there's an hypocrisy involved there. Where do we get our wood products? Well then, now we get them from Canada, which Weyerhaeuser also owns. So there's an hypocrisy there in Weyerhaeuser fighting to keep the environmental laws going here because they make good money in Canada, and they get to say they eliminate the federal government as a competitor.

So the artificial elimination of wood products over half the land in Oregon, and I think I can say the same thing for Washington, has been a little bit muted because there's been all this upswing in technology. Hewlett-Packard and these other outlets, Intel, that moved into Oregon, they're the largest employers, and then agriculture. Hewlett-Packard in Corvallis and Intel in Washington county, I think they're the largest employer in the state.

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Bob: And they're just California high-tech spinoffs and now they're our major industry. So I think it's been debilitating to the school system, to the rural economies, and it's not sustainable.

Brinda: What is not, the restoration?

Bob: The restoration movement, as I've defined it. [Laughs]

Brinda: Okay, and yet you recognize that you're a part of it. I mean just in terms of the work you're doing is restoration though.

Bob: Yeah, I'm doing restoration work and that makes me an anomaly in the restoration industry. I don't think most of them are doing restoration work.

Brinda: Okay can you say more about that? That's why I'm confused because . . .

Bob: Right, I think most restoration work is not going in and restoring an earlier condition. It's creating an unprecedented condition. So it's not really restoration. They call it restoration, just like they call it conservation, but they're really not conserving resources. They're not using them at all. I would say they are wasting resources but they're saying they've got alternative values, like wildlife habitat or aesthetics or soil or something of that nature. So the restorationists have backed away from the position that they are restoring kind of sets of conditions. Because I'm an historian, and they're not. They're just making up . . .

Brinda: So what are they doing? What are you saying they . . .

Bob: Now their rationales are "restoring functionality to an ecosystem."

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: Are you familiar with the poem Jabberwocky?

Brinda: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, it's been a while.

Bob: Okay, but Lewis Carroll is basically using nonsense words to sound as if he's actually making a speech.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: When they say they are restoring environments for the restoration movement . . .

Brinda: And who is part of this movement, when we're talking about "they?"

Bob: Well, you've got to be more specific. I would say it's fueled by very successful lawyers because they're dealing with federal policies.

Brinda: And we're talking about public land, on federal land?

Bob: Yeah, and that's over half the land in Oregon.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: So it's like, that's why I have to stop on some of these questions, I mean realizing, well I'm talking just about the federal land, or we're talking just about the private land. There is very little restoration going on on private lands.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And what's being done on private lands is typically paid for with government money. Fish and Wildlife is paying for habitat. Or Soil Conservation Service is paying for streambank stability. So they're getting federal money, they are getting cost-share grants to plant seedlings in riparian areas for shade.

Brinda: On private lands.

Bob: And on federal lands.

Brinda: So that money from the federal government, or these agencies in the federal government, help subsidize your work on private land.

Bob: I don't do that work though.

Brinda: Oh wow, okay.

Bob: See that's what I'm saying is like, that's the busy work.

Brinda: I thought that that's what you were doing on private land?

Bob: No, no. We're using the same word. When I'm saying restoring, I'm talking about restoring an historical condition.

Brinda: Correct.

Bob: Or precontact condition. A combination of plants, animals, and management processes that accurately, as much as possible, reflect past conditions.

Brinda: And is part of that then paid for . . .

Bob: It's all been private money, so far.

Brinda: It's all been private money? They're not taking from . . .

Bob: I'm not using tax money to do this.

Brinda: Okay. You might not be but the private land owners might be.

Bob: Well but see, you're asking me what I'm doing for restoration so I'm . . . I would probably accept federal money, and we're looking to do the same types of work on federal lands, but most of the land is . . . okay, is like the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to the state. And then that money is lottery revenues or it's from the feds. Or it's from Fish and Wildlife Service. So there's a lot of federal money going into private lands to achieve ecosystem "enhancement," which means like the whole area has given objectives. And ecosystem objectives are typically open culverts for the fish, plantings along stream banks, movement of root wads to create pools, and this is what's called restoration activities. Or they're being performed on federal lands, and road decommissioning is called restoration. But also putting root wads in creeks and moving rocks around and that type of thing.

They just had a front page story where they took a bunch of logs, that you could build a house from, but they jammed them in Calapooia River, where I live, and the person said, "Okay, in the next flood this is gonna shift around, it's gonna create pools for the fish." Which is probably true. But they could've taken a backhoe and created pools for the fish with about one tenth of the dollars. At some point what's going to happen to the logs, is they're going to blow out in a flood. That's what I do with my research is how often do these pulses occur then blow out all the logs and they're gonna be somewhere around the ocean or downtown and they're gonna cause a lotta damage like a big Brillo pad as they're going up and down. That's the part that the restorationists, "they" that I'm talking about, don't get, and that would be the policy people, the legal people that are fighting for not having logging, having restoration, brush piling, thinning, what they call thinning, instead.

So we've got the policy makers, we've got the lawyers that are fighting for it, using the federal laws and regulations, sometimes even odd rural employment type acts. Then you've got the movement people themselves. These are the people that climb the trees or work the jobs. I think you'll find a fairly consistent philosophy, either they're labor-oriented and they're sending out Mexican work crews trying to make the dollar for whatever you tell 'em to do, doesn't matter, paint the porch, move the rock, thin the trees, pile the brush, casual labor crews just do whatever they're told -- or they're idealistic in that they're people that think they're out there helping the fish and helping the environment.

Brinda: Right, and those are probably two different groups 'cause what --

Bob: But they're both, I think, reflecting of current restoration activities, and they'd both be dependent on tax money.

7. [1:03:31] The Environmentalists & Precontact Conditions

Brinda: Okay, and so what a lot of I've been hearing just in terms of reading from a lot of these same movement people, and here I'm not counting the underground crews 'cause what I've found, at least through interviews, is say the Hispanic workers or the contractors, they're not necessarily advocating for any type of work, they'll just do what's there.

Bob: Right, that's why I'm calling them casual labor work crews. Exactly.

Brinda: Okay, versus maybe more movement people who --

Bob: They're better educated for the most part, I think.

Brinda: The movement people or the --

Bob: Yeah.

Brinda: Yes. They're sort of maybe having a more sort of idealistic or ideological agenda of what they want to see and based on the policy changes, crews are doing whatever work is there.

Bob: Right.

Brinda: Okay, but what I'm reading, and the papers say is apart from the we're creating "ecosystem functionality," we want the salmon back, I often see a justification as also, we are creating sort of pre-settlement conditions and I'm hearing you say that.

Bob: I am saying . . . we are . . . I am doing it, but I have not seen a restorationist do that. I have seen them claim it.

Brinda: But have you heard them say that?

Bob: Yeah, I've heard 'em say they're conservationists too. That's why I'm saying what we're doing is different from them, as they're claiming.

Brinda: 'Cause you probably have things that are restoring ecosystem functions and ecological . . . I mean, what's the difference, I guess?

Bob: One of the differences is, okay, when we say we're restoring precontact conditions, those are very definite conditions, using research skills to determine what those were. That's what I do.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: Okay, when they say "restoring ecosystem function," that's Jabberwocky. What the hell does that mean? It's like Jerry Franklin was saying, "We can't log any of these trees off 'cause this is all the wood the soil's ever going to get." Well, maybe in his lifetime, but he's old. But what does that mean? Does soil need, does it need aspirin, too? Why do these coho need conifers? They didn't use to. Why do they need them now? Do they need running pools? Okay, but what's wrong with just making a pool for 'em if that's what they need?

Why make a policy for them that's really inefficient under the assumption that's what they need without at least some scientific testing. So there's not scientific management going on. It's a feel-good, leaf-raking, ephemeral process that I'm referring to that they get either the labor crews doing, and making a profit for themselves doing it, and they could care less what it is; or we get the idealistic people promoting, supporting, protesting, hiring lawyers, filing suits, so there's a real litigation aspect to forest management that is a large share of why reforestation industry has changed so much.

Brinda: Okay, then in terms of precontact conditions, a lot of environmentalists do use those --

Bob: Words.

Brinda: -- words.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: And what are some of the justifications for precontact conditions?

Bob: I just wrote a nice little article on this. I should send it to you. It's intended for a general audience. The main difference, and this causes consternation with people when I bring it up, but I think it's exactly right: what they're talking about in precontact conditions is a basic form of institutionalized racism. They are describing the environmental movement and that's been a whole lot of my antagonism towards them the last 10 or 15 years because they've been informed. They know better now.

Their idea is that the people for 10,000 years lived in this environment that were totally at the mercy of nature. They have an anthology written in 1999, that's only 6 years ago, by leading scientists all around the Pacific Northwest, including some at University of Oregon, stating that you cannot differentiate between Indian fire, which is my specialty, and lightning fire. Well, you can, but they couldn't, but they're the types of people, I mentioned Jerry Franklin or Jim Agee**,** or people like that that have got these ideas that Indian people were that incompetent, just waiting for lightning to clear some huckleberries for 'em or keep the savanna open, and that couldn't happen in the Coast Range where I studied 'cause there is no lightning fire.

It's one of the least incidents of lightning fire in the world, but it couldn't happen anyhow. All the oak would disappear, the camas would disappear. Tens of thousands of contiguous acres of tarweed would disappear. They'd all get overtaken by conifers if you didn't have people in the environment like we did, disturbing it and my specialty, burning it. But they're also tilling, pruning, and walking and [unintelligible]. What we call structure and creeks, they called firewood or impediments to travel.

People didn't let stuff build up like that. They had canoes running up and down the streams, and they had fire going constantly. They didn't let wood float by and build up on the beach as salamander habitat or any of that, clam colonies, or whatever the heck they're talking about. The area was pretty much bereft of dead wood where people lived, especially where they lived for thousands of years.

When you've got weirs that are 3,000 years old and village sites that are 8,000 and 10,000 years old, so those areas people use wood every day. It couldn't have built up the way that they're saying, so I think that there's this idea that a functionality outside of human imposition of management . . .

Then the other side of the coin is like then everything we've done, "we've" been mostly whites for the last 150 years, has been evil. [Laughs] We've logged, we've plowed, we've fenced, we've put in pavement. Well, that's all true. I don't know why that's evil. It like everybody seems to be running their bikes down the pavement and buying their groceries at Safeway and living in a nice house, so it's like how that constitutes evil; it gets into why I think a whole lot of the movement's based on which is more political agenda than science.

I think that would be a way to differentiate between reforestation workers, or basically trained professionals, using scientific management processes for resource management; using scientific methodology for resource management as opposed to a lot of the restoration movement, which is based on almost like spiritual guidance. They're talking about precontact conditions, but it's like this idealized environment in which people are inconsequential and to me that's not idealized, that's not only erroneous, but it's also racist. They don't seem to have much understanding or respect for what people were actually doing here for last 10,000 years, which is --

Brinda: Okay, I think I'm starting to understand the distinction. You're saying some of the way the environmentalists use this word or concept of precontact conditions is like writing the people out of that environment, writing the managers, the active management of these lands out.

Bob: Yeah. Right. They'll put the people in. They'll pay 'em lip service but they don't have them as a relevant factor. And they're judged by "naturally functioning ecosystems." That's why I keep pausing here. It's like where did we get

off into nature versus nurture? I think it's naturally functioning, but I think it's only natural that somebody's gonna want to drive a car to Roseburg instead of walk, especially in this rain.

So I think those are natural things and I see humans as natural parts of the environment and I see us as particularly inventive and industrious; but bears use tools, ants and termites build homes, so do birds, they build nests. We're not the only ones to use tools or feather our own nests. We're just way better at it than any other animals so far.

You take people out of the environment, and then you start looking at that as an ideal, and to me that's just bad policy. It's 'cause they're not gonna achieve what they want and if they did, why don't they just move to Mercury or Mars, so it'll be without people where there are ecosystems that don't have human involvement. So they're idealizing to me the wrong set of conditions and it's a bad religion for that reason.

Brinda: What would you think would be an economically viable set of conditions? What would your vision of that be?

Bob: I think Indian-type burning conditions, if they were re-implemented across the environment, where you have seasonal burning, instead of putting out fires in August and September, you're out starting fires, but they're in areas in which you've set the fuel loads, in which you can maintain X amount of habitat, and your justification for that might be recreation, hunting, photography, something like that because -- maybe even native foods.

Maybe there is a market for acorns or camas. There's a developing market for camas or cat's ears or other wild strawberries that are native, or wild blackberries that are native. There might be developing markets for those foods as there had been for 10,000 years, maybe at pow wows or, I don't know, traditional restaurants or, I don't know. That's possible, but in the interim all we're getting is a lot of diversity and then we've got to keep managing it. That creates jobs and --

Brinda: Diversity of terms of . . .

Bob: Plants and animals. If you have a Douglas fir environment, which grows your most timber and creates your most money, within about 10 or 15 years it shades everything else underneath, it drops a bunch of needles on everything, it becomes very acidic and you've got some mushrooms; but you don't hear songbirds, you don't see deer, you don't see people. It's dark and dank and it stays that way for a hundred years and then it starts breaking apart and you have bits and pieces, but you also have falling trees and limbs and those things, so it's a dangerous, shady, cumbersome environment as it gets older.

But oak, you have a lotta daylight. You might have 30 species of forbs associated with oak woodlands. You might have half a dozen different type of bulbs. You might have half a dozen native grasses. You have, I don't know, 100-150 different types of birds, not three. So by diversity, in an oak woodland, you have significant increase in vascular plant species and vertebrates, but also bugs, butterflies, things like that.

That's what I mean, it's like it's almost a park-like condition. It's highly productive for crops that are no longer commercial, but the environment is productive for humans values, and so they serve as firebreaks. There's ways to, I think, enhance timber production by isolating it into the areas where timber had been grown 150 years ago. I think one reason it was not all burned up was because these other areas were burnt regularly and there wasn't a chance for ladder fuels to build up and there were buffers between them, and when an area would burst into flames, you'd get a crown fire, the animals would have these meadows and prairies and bracken fern strips and things to run to and we know that's what they did. I remember records of that in my own family from 1902 that people would just go into these Indian prairies, people and wild animals, and wait for the fire to burn through.

Brinda: It sounds like there is, well I don't know if there's a need right now. It sounds like the timber industry, at least in this area, has gone downhill pretty quickly.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: But you're advocating sort of both types of resources.

Bob: Yep. More of a balance but a type of pattern that was here 150 years ago, restoring older landscape-scale patterns I think would meet a lot of the current objectives and would also create a sustainable economic situation.

Brinda: And where do you think funding from that might come from?

Bob: Timber. One of the nice things when you log trees is they produce income, but then the other ones are just for talking about. Maybe hunting for meds, maybe recreational camping fees, maybe incidental harvests, specialty crop harvests like they do with mushrooms now, maybe camas, bracken fern, things like that. So probably incidental use fees, incidental secondary forest products, but principally timber production pays the bills, just like football pays the bills at the college.

Brinda: Yeah, but timber production might pay the bills, might pay for this restoration on other areas, sort of non-timber-producing areas.

Bob: Right.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And the rationale would be they're trying to grow, I don't know, spotted owls and strawberries and everything in the same acres. They want X number of snags, X number of conifers per running stream mile and so on. If different areas were relegated to different things so that the endangered species were over here with oak and loggers are over here with the Douglas fir and the tree planters are burning out the woodlands on one day and replanting the Douglas fir on another day, then I think we'd get that balance of values and we'd get the efficiency of a trained workforce and we'd reduce the dangers of wildfire, increase the endangered species habitat, timber production, and so on. It's based on active management as opposed to benign neglect which is what wilderness areas in --

Brinda: So, yeah. What I'm hearing you say, and I think I'm understanding more of, is that some kinds of restoration work, what they're calling . . . Let's say "they" as some environmentalists --

Bob: The environmental industry. [Laughs]

Brinda: Yeah, the environmental industry, and again that in itself seems really complex to me 'cause I hear different voices even in that industry. It's hard to characterize it as one, but folks saying restoration work is almost like leave it alone, don't touch it. Where some people, environmentalists, are also saying no, it has to be actively managed and burned but according to sort of Indian burning practices, but who might say, something like you, still need to put logs in the streams and all. So it seems like there's a whole variety of management practices some of which overlap, some of which don't and it's hard to categorize.

Bob: I think the second group you're talking about is an emerging group.

Brinda: Is an emerging group? Okay.

Bob: It's the politically correct environmentalists who are saying, okay, we were wrong about the Indians, we need 'em there, but we need to keep 'em in their place, around the heads of creeks and here and there, but we still need to have this old organic wood material, we still need this . . . and then they go right back to a "naturally functioning ecosystem" with, what did they used to call 'em? Not figureheads but . . .

Brinda: Tokens?

Bob: Tokens, yep. Token people in the environment. Token village here, token campground there. I've had anthropologists say, "Yeah, but they didn't go up in the hills." It's like, "Well we do, why didn't they?" It's like, "How could they carry water up there?" It's like, "Well, you go down to the creek, you drink, and then you walk up to the top of the hill." It's like we did it all the time tree planting. You didn't carry a canteen around. You just carried it in your stomach like anybody.

It's like, "Well, why would they go up there?" It's like, "Well, nice place to meet people, beautiful view, something to do in the afternoon, and just happens to have all kinds of food crops up there." So we know not only why they went there, we know what time of year they went there, when you harvest these crops, when you pick these berries, when you harvest these acorns.

We start seeing that people don't have seasonal rounds, they're just like farmers that are tending crops, and that's the pattern I'm finding a lot in western Oregon, not so much eastern Oregon. And well, there's so much reforestation work back there 'cause now it's like junipers encroaching into prairies and people there really probably did have seasonal rounds and bitter winters and things. But west of the Cascades, where the principal timber grows in the world really, say from Shasta right up into BC, the interior valleys, from Sacramento Valley right down to Mexico, really had pretty large populations of relatively sedentary people that practiced more farming than forestry, more farming than hunting or gathering.

They weren't really hunters and gatherers, that's characterizing them badly. So, anyhow, that's a long way to say that even though they're now saying lip service to these Indians, I'm not familiar with any . . . In my field of study I'm not seeing any literature coming from them. I'm not seeing anything that's particularly revealing that they understand the topic. My field of ecology is people in the environment. When they're putting people in the environment it's usually really awkwardly 'cause they haven't done it before and so they're trying to treat people; they go okay, these people were spiritually advanced, and they had oral traditions, and so they've got this mythical human being that they can kind of put in the environment, that can kind of subsist, and I think that's just not an accurate viewpoint. I don't think it's very respectful either.

Brinda: Yeah, it's almost like this idealized or romanticized vision of --

Bob: -- of a eunuch without a brain; [Laughs] some simple little human that how did they get by, dang it? They're so soft and gentle on the earth.

Brinda: Right, the noble savage.

Bob: Yep. Their sole viewpoint, the gentle nitwit. It's like it's not a very noble being that they're describing, they're describing somebody that's virtually incompetent and that's why I think the institutionalized racism comes in. It's like, "Hmm, too bad they're not competent like us, they could've got a job logging or something."

Brinda: Huh. I don't know if this is part of your thesis. You were looking at management practices, right? Pre-settlement?

Bob: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Brinda: And what the land used to look like?

Bob: Yes, as a result of those management practices.

Brinda: As a result, and so I've heard about or read about Muir taking his horse through park-like conditions, Ponderosa pine, and it was actually not very dense, like newer.

Bob: Yep, right.

Brinda: So, is that what you found as well?

Bob: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Virtually no snags, no coarse woody debris, no structure in the streams. They were like they had--

Brinda: In certain parts of Oregon, right?

Bob: Almost all of it.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: There were large areas that were forested, but they're almost topographically isolated, broken away from . . . like the east slope of the Coast Range was, the whole entire east slope was virtually unforested, so they started calling it Willamette Valley, like it wasn't a range of mountains. Well, it was forested with oak and just little patches of fir. The west slope was virtually all forested except all the ridges had bracken fern prairies, all the peaks were bald, and all the lowland valleys and low gradient areas where the fish were, were grass and prairies.

So, yeah. The conditions Muir described were conditions created by constant incremental and cumulative gathering of firewood. That's a massive amount of coarse woody debris everywhere that grandma could send you to get it. Every day, you cooked lunch so every day firewood was gathered and there is the burnout around towns and campgrounds and homes, so you had to go outside of that area 'cause if you didn't gather the firewood you burnt it off so you didn't want to waste it, so you gathered it. Anything came floating down the stream, that's just like today.

Brinda: And then sort of the buildup has taken place because over the years there was just that fear of fire and --

Bob: Well, the Indians died off very dramatically in the 1780s, and then by the 1830s --

Brinda: Through disease and warfare.

Bob: Not warfare, disease. In northern California and southwest Oregon, there's quite a few tribes that lived there. They were isolated and they were killed off by white people in the '50s, 1850s. But, by the 1830s, most of the people of western Oregon had died from disease, smallpox, malaria, especially.

Brinda: Brought over from the --

Bob: Yep, Africa and Europe, and from the United States, which is the east coast. You had white and black people coming here that are bringing diseases in. I think the Chinese didn't start coming till the 1860s, but by that time most of the Indians were gone. So in western Oregon, not so much up in western Washington, and not so much down in northwest California, but in western Oregon most everybody was dead.

8. [1:25:53] Fire Suppression vs. Fire Exclusion

Bob: So, when [white] people came in the environment, it only takes 5 or 10 years for the brush to build up, and what I've been looking at the Biscuit Fire here, about 30 or 40 years for the ladder fuels to build up, and about 40 to 80 years for Douglas fir to overtake oak. So you've got basically somewhere between 10 years and 80 years to create this transition to a firebomb, where you've got ladder fuels, and you've got contiguous fuels along the stream banks.

Brinda: Well and there was like a massive program of forest fire suppression as well.

Bob: Yeah, but that's way overblown. The bigger problem was fire exclusion. They stopped people from burning. They took fire out of the woods, whereas fire suppression says, okay, you've got a fire, now suppress it. You can't

suppress a fire. Every one of these, why are we having 500,000 acre fires a hundred years later? We've got satellites and we've got air drops, and we've got Caterpillars, and we've got hoses, and we've got internet communications, and we still can't put a fire out. The weather has gotta change. So the fire suppression policy --

Brinda: Fire exclusion. Okay, a policy of fire exclusion.

Bob: Yep. First, get rid of the Indians, cause you gotta have livestock, so you want to graze. And then you get rid of livestock and people that are starting the fires, they called them fern burners in the 1930s, they would burn off these areas that the Indians had burnt off, and they stopped it. The Keep Oregon Green movement was a reaction to people setting fires so there's a big difference; 'cause with one of them you say okay, we want to return it the way it is, let's have a "let-it-burn" policy.

That's the assumption that people are nitwits, and fire would start and then everybody would go running around till it went out or something; rather than set fire to it, a prescribed fire policy, which is wait a minute, let's set fire to this now while we can control the smoke so there's not so much pollution and so we've created a fuel-free zone so if the wildfire comes from those mountain over there it's gonna hit like bare dirt.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: That type of purposeful fire exclusion is the big change that allowed all the ladder fuels and the shrubs to build up, I think.

Brinda: Right, but there is this policy of fire exclusion on plantation lands, right?

Bob: Well, there's a policy of fire exclusion on virtually all lands except campgrounds with firepits. There's some prescribed burning that's going on, but not even 30 years ago we did 18,000 acres of prescribed burning.

Brinda: Where?

Bob: On slash areas, areas that we had slashed and sprayed over on the coast and mostly in Lincoln County.

Brinda: And then after that you would plant?

Bob: Plant.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: So we really learned the value of a good hot burn, and if you expose the mineral soil that all the environmentalists used to say was terrible, that's actually the very best you can do 'cause that's just what the Indians did. Once you got bare soil you got trees that'll take. They don't have competition, and you've burnt off the weeds and so on.

Brinda: Right. And I guess here the difference would be the Indians burned for basket weaving material or . . .

Bob: That'd be one.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: Mostly food production.

Brinda: And food production.

Bob: They would keep the oak open cause gathering oak acorns was a major thing and then usually there's one or two crops in conjunction with it. In the low valley areas there's camas a lot and they're digging that up so not only are they burning it off, but they got bare dirt when they're through digging.

Brinda: What's camas?

Bob: Camas is a beautiful blue flower. It stands about that tall and it blooms in May, and it's got a bulb. It was like the equivalent, it would be the Irish potato, or, in your country, it's probably rice, or has it turned to wheat?

Brinda: No, the north is wheat, the south is rice.

Bob: Okay, so it'd be like wheat or rice. Now there was something called Indian wheat which was tarweed, which they roasted, and they had the seeds, but camas was a primary food. It would be like the staple for most of the northwest tribes. They try to tell us it's salmon, but it was camas. In some areas they didn't get salmon hardly at all. There were other roots and bulbs and things that people ate, bracken fern roots for starch.

Brinda: Okay, and they used wood primarily for firewood? Is that accurate?

Bob: I'd say yeah. I would say yeah. They also used large wood for . . . they had canoes that went out in the ocean. They could haul 25 and 30 people and they could go out when European ships couldn't, so they were able to travel on the ocean on large boats. They had houses that were big, 300 feet long, as long as a football field and wide, and maybe held 20 or 30 families in compartments with cedar plank siding to 'em, so they had a lot of use for large wood products. Then smaller wood products would be arrows and bows and spoons and bowls and lots of fibers, lots of woven materials.

Brinda: Okay, so in terms of life sort of coming back to the present, the present economy, do you see any move towards a restoration movement in terms; the restoration defined as . . .

Bob: As I'm defining it?

Brinda: As you're defining it.

Bob: I hope so. If they're going to keep their credibility, which they've been very credible with the courts, but they're losing credibility finally, quickly, with scientists.

Brinda: Really?

Bob: Yep. And I'm one of those examples. It's like I'm a scientist, so it's like, nope, these people are on a mission, they're not being consistent with their logic or their data. So they want one thing but their method of getting there is wrong. It's like they won't get there the way they're saying. So I'm hopeful that if the restoration movement continues, that it actually goes towards an historic range of variation and actually looks to restore actual conditions, and we forget about this functionality silliness 'cause they can't tell me what that means. You can't tell me; I can't tell you. It's like functionality is kinda like serious [unintelligible]. It's like well, what's that mean exactly?

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And the way they're using it; that's kind of the Jabberwocky thing is . . . it's actually probably more like an *Animal Farm* thing where they say, "Oh, now we're conservationists" 'cause it's good to be conservationists, but it's like everything they're saying and doing isn't what conservationists say and do. Why are they calling themselves that? It's very convenient.

Now when they say they're restoring precontact conditions, that's not what the Indians did. Why are they saying that they're doing that? They're trying to sell us the idea that they know what those conditions are.

9. [1:33:15] Wildfire Risk & US Forest Service Accountability (2005)

Brinda: Right. Where do you see the Forest Service moving? What direction do you see the Forest Service moving in, in the management of public lands, public forests?

Bob: I hope they stop moving downhill really fast like they've been moving in the last 15 or 20 years. They're just going . . . There's a book that just came out from the old Forest Service guys and the problem with the Forest Service is, it was like a hockey team. It was all old white guys. So, they said okay, now we need diversity, so they just stopped hiring old white guys. So they got rid of their knowledge base, and they started laying them off through attrition, and they started replacing them with a sexually and racially diverse work crew, which is good. But, they did it so quick that the people didn't have a chance to learn their jobs. So they got a lot of political appointments basically. Not friends of the President, but friends of the Ecologists, maybe. They put together a well-educated, almost totally inexperienced work force. So people I think, like in the [*Evergreen*] magazine, I can show you where it's saying, "Hey, if we keep managing our forests like this they're all going to burst into flames." But that was a pretty good prediction.

And I also say, "but people won't stand for that." That's where I was wrong. People have stood for it, because the Forest Service has been incapable of harvesting those lands or regenerating them. They really kept a lot of people in the position of very little timber sales experience, or reforestation experience, or fire management experience, that are in there managing fires and making plans and planning for reforestation. So it's discouraging. So I don't know where they're going. I would like to see the Wilderness areas go over to Parks, because Parks are at least managing for a period of time. They're not just letting them all burn up, like the Forest Service is doing. I would prefer that the forest in Oregon were privatized over what the Forest Service has been doing. I think the Forest Service did pretty good for 80 or 100 years, but I think the last 10 years, they're just fighting litigation and that seems to be . . . I was going to say, the old guys, they just finished a book. It's a --

Brinda: Yeah, what is that?

Bob: "We have an objective." *We Had An Objective [In Mind: The US Forest Service in the Pacific Northwest, 1905 to 2005],* and--

Brinda: Who wrote that? Do you know?

Bob: Oh, the Old Smokeys. It was just a bunch of stories from the Forest Service guys, but I've talked to a couple of them and we kind of kid around. It was like, when you read that, the way they pronounce it now is, "we <u>had</u> an <u>objective</u>," but the way these guys titled it was, "<u>we</u> had an objective." [Laughter] In other words, like, <u>we</u> knew what we were doing.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: As opposed to now, so.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: It was kind of like an inside joke. [Laughs]

Brinda: And do you think BLM manages the land . . .

Bob: Much better, but their management constraints are different. And the main problem at BLM is that they've got this checkerboard pattern that they inherited from policy, and I think that if they had done something like they were threatening to do about ten years ago, like a land exchange where they could get more --

Brinda: Continuous?

Bob: -- continuous ownerships.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: That the need for roads passing all these areas and then the straight lines in the environment which are [unintelligible] and which are fire problems and so on. Those things would . . . could come to an end. I think that they've had a bad management situation imposed on them, but the management of their lands has been a lot more professional, and they've been managing them much better than --

Brinda: And when you --

Bob: -- fighting litigation.

Brinda: Okay, and when you say management, like you said with the Forest Service, part of it was like, they're just letting the fire burn the land?

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: Burn it up.

Bob: Especially the Wildernesses areas, they are not going in there harvesting anything. They're getting volunteers to do the trails, so they're not even having professional quality work done with the trail building.

Brinda: Okay. So you're . . . Would one of your recommendations for management be to actively thin some of these areas?

Bob: Oh, yeah.

Brinda: So that then fire could go through and not be as catastrophic?

Bob: Clearcut, thin, harvest. If you can, do it at a profit. Turn it into firewood. But you've got to keep managing the vegetation, which means you've got to keep disturbing the environment and that series of disturbances . . . What's good about the [National] Park Service is they say, "We want an 1850s pattern." So that's kind of . . . They have to do their research, and they have to do actions to get that, and then when they got it, they've got to maintain it. Well, I'd like to see the Park Service down here in the Biscuit [Fire] manage for it when they first had gold mines running in the Civil War era, 1850s or 1860s. Or even a little bit earlier, when they had Indians managing the land before white settlement, 1830s and 1840s. To me those would be wonderful times. Or even 1910. But right now we've got this unprecedented condition of tens of thousands of trees migrated in the area.

These invasive trees created contiguous ladder fuels, and they all burned up and then they burned all the old trees that had been there for hundreds of years with them, and of any spotted owls that followed, it burned them up, too . . . So, so much more for preserving the old-growth. Now it's firewood and it's all . . . "Now we got to keep them from logging."

Brinda: Okay. Well, okay. This is good. I mean --

Bob: I was probably getting way off on a tangent from your studies though. [Laughs]

Brinda: Well, you know a lot of the stuff that was . . . I think this is important still. In order for me to understand that broader context of what restoration means for different people even.

Bob: Yeah.

Brinda: And how it's being used because it's --

Bob: Political.

Brinda: It's political. It can be thrown out there and if someone doesn't ask . . . That's why I kept asking, so I could understand it from a different perspective. How is it being used? How are you using it? Because I heard it used in different ways. So it's really not a tangent in terms of my understanding it.

Bob: Yep, and it's a better way to understand reforestation to us. I think you're starting to be able to fine-tune the difference between the two.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: It's like, "reforest" is to put a forest back and it's almost always got a timber value component to it. Whereas "restoration" is to restore "functionality." I don't know what the hell it means, but there's almost always a government subsidy attached to whatever the project is.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: I think that's a huge, huge difference.

Brinda: Yeah.

Brinda: And do you see a lot planting going on, on the fire . . . burned over lands. Don't they have to do it legally?

Bob: Well, on state lands, yes. Where we're getting oak restoration going now, that requires . . . For a while, it was still required that you couldn't do oak restoration because you had to plant these conifers within 24 months. Well, now salvage is against the law to do, and then plant. It's what they've done on Wilderness areas, I think is just a shame if we don't learn from it. I think it's been really counter-productive. If they're trying to save spotted owl habitat and old-growth timber, they've failed. If they're trying to save old meadows and berry patches and cultural landscapes, they've failed. If they're trying to keep management costs down by eliminating management, they've succeeded. It doesn't grow any taxes; it doesn't create any jobs. So, I think it's from a conservation standpoint, it's just wasted resources.

Brinda: What about for non-Wilderness areas? Say National Forests. Better not state land than federal land.

Bob: Right.

Brinda: Like the Biscuit burned 500 hundred thousand acres plus. Some of that was National Forest.

Bob: Well, most of it was National Forest. Yep.

Brinda: So then . . .

Bob: How much has been logged? Less than 7%, and that's creating all kinds of controversy. Out of the logging how much do they plan on planting with trees? So far about 100% of it, but people like me are throwing that into question. They haven't even got that far yet, and it's been three years.

Brinda: Right, because you're saying they can't plant until the stuff is taken out?

Bob: And they can't take a lot of it out because it's a riparian zone, because it's a Botanical Reserve, because it's a Wilderness, because it's an unroaded set-aside. It's like there's always a condition that you can't go in and harvest the material. So no matter if you go in there and plant, it's dangerous because you've got things hanging up there that are going to fall on you. We used to have crews out cutting those snags because they were dangerous. Same thing as a fire. If you've set it under controlled circumstances -- cut a snag and under controlled circumstances, it's dangerous, but not as dangerous as the one that just goes when it feels like it. Without warning and . . . so, and then even if you're going to plant it, those things are going to be falling on them and skidding down the hill. They're not going to do what the environmentalist say they're going to, which is to build the soils and protect the environment. They're going to cause erosion.

They're going to be wildfire traps. They're going to be a problem until they're managed. Even if the management is benign neglect and . . . They've got to accept the responsibility for the management actions or inactions and I think that's where the Forest Services has really failed miserably in the last 10 or 15 years. There's no accountability.

10. [1:42:54] "Environmental Restoration" & Race

Brinda: Okay, and maybe just the thing . . . You were saying that, in terms of the restoration movement, there were certain people, maybe key players, maybe not key players, but who got some of these projects going. [inaudible 01:43:16] restoration projects and these are graduate students or academics. So are there people that you have mind, or that I might read their stuff or follow up on? I mean, you said there's one professor you could think of.

Bob: Yeah. Let me think . . . If I can think of her name. I can find it out easy enough. She did it for about 10 or 12 years. She had an interesting name. So I can probably figure that out easy enough.

Brinda: Is she at or in --

Bob: At OSU. She used to be there for a lot of years. I don't know if she still is.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: So there's her.

Brinda: And do they, would you say, pitch these ideas to the state?

Bob: Well, you'd probably go to the Oregon Natural Resources Council, or one of those groups. And they're the ones that lobbied for reduced cutting and then when that started turning up in fires, then they started pushing thinning and fuel management.

Brinda: But you're pushing for that too, right?

Bob: Yeah, or clear cutting. I'm just pushing for good land management. I don't care what it is, as long as it's science based, logical.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: Responsible.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: And hopefully self-perpetuated. So it'll produce an income so you can keep doing it rather than be dependent on tax revenues, so whenever Congress legislates, or the war on the right gets too big, or we have another hurricane, or something; it just doesn't stop.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And that's, I think, the fragility of having a politically developed industry replace an economically driven industry. I think that's . . . I'm not too sure if it's one of the things we've really seen.

Brinda: I like that quote. ["Uh-oh," Laughter] Okay, great. Right, because most of the outliers . . . And what I'm primarily looking at right now, like I said, is the public sector. Public lands and that work force and the change. The social history of change that is hand in hand with management practices, how that has affected that change. So, do you think some of this just won't be around in the rest 10, 15 years?

Bob: The restoration workforce?

Brinda: Yeah, and I don't even know what to call them. Whether to call them a restorationist, because they sound to me like --

Bob: That's pretty good. The environmental woods workers or you know, the restorationists is pretty good because it's the way they've used the word.

Brinda: Right but I'm thinking of the Hispanic workers part. Like say that was the [crosstalk 01:46:07] in the workforce.

Bob: I think they're the subset. I think they're the ones that actually do the work. There's a real racial element to the whole environmental movement.

Brinda: Absolutely. That's a big part of the thing.

Bob: Go into a Wilderness area and try to find a black family, or a Hispanic family. Or a really old person or an ill person or an infant. It's all these white yuppies. And they're not paying taxes on that land, they're already privileged. Why do they get to do what they want with it? What's wrong with rural people using it? So there is a real elitist, you know, "We don't log here -- we use logs from China and Canada" [Laughs] type of mentality hypocrisy that's going on that I don't think is sustainable.

Brinda: So what would you say about this racialized element of the workforce? Because the workers were doing a lot of what might be called grunt work. Whether it's limited amounts of planting still, or a lot of the thinning right now, they're spending all --

Bob: Or brush piling.

Brinda: Exactly. All of that, and it's really intense manual labor. I went out and saw these guys working, a lot of them, and --

Bob: Right. In this day and age, why are they doing that? Why don't we have black people down in the South cutting cotton by hand? Why don't we? We've got Mexican workers out here in Oregon hand-piling and where are they doing it? Federal land. Why aren't they doing it on private land?

Brinda: Are they not? Because of technology?

Bob: Because they're raking leaves. They're keeping busy doing jobs for . . . And there's supposed to be jobs to local communities. They're not supposed to be exported to a foreign country, but aren't we hiring foreigners that are sending the money home? And aren't we even doing in defiance of immigration laws? So why are we doing that? That's what I'm saying. There's an ethical element to the environmental movement, or the restoration movement, that's inherently racist and it manifests itself in lots of different ways. But it's privileged white people running it. And they're mostly lawyers and their well-educated kids that don't want to work, study or something, or want to get in the newspaper. I don't know what their motivations are. I don't think they're out for their children or grandchildren like they argued. A lot of them don't even have kids. My grandson is 15, and I don't think that's a true argument, and I don't they're conservationists. I think they're extremely wasteful and more out to be obstructionists than conservationists and when I think the . . . What they're doing with the Mexican workforce is not right.

Brinda: And do you think they're the ones controlling that workforce? Or is it [crosstalk 01:48:53] workforce. Is there a consequence of no one else wanting to do that work and --

Bob: No, we have plenty of people that can do that work. Nobody else wants to do that work illegally with no benefits for minimum wage.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: Just like nobody wants to be a brain surgeon for 12 thousand a year. Nobody wants to be a reforestation worker in which he's competing with the three Jose's who are here and there and maybe with the names of Frederico next week. It's like, well, who wants to be associated with that? Who wants to be 35 years old flipping hamburgers at McDonald's? You know, when they turn it into a minimum wage casual labor job, then there's no competition for that work because it's not real work. That's why I said before, it's more important that we're doing real work that needed to be done and had a consequence. It looked better, it was more productive, it was reproduction and people could see jobs, like whatever it was you were working for, emanating from that. From this stuff that's going on now, it's a little bit bizarre.

Brinda: So back then, okay? Back then, and I'm saying then, I'm talking about --

Bob: Late 60s to early 80s.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: Mid 60s to mid 80s is a real good, prettier time.

Brinda: Mid 60s to mid 80s.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: So in my research it shows that there was a mix of crews and I'm talking about diversity in Oregon in terms of racial diversity to look at the racialized elements.

Bob: They developed. They even had Vietnamese crews for a while.

Brinda: Oh really?

Bob: Yep. The problem with those guys was they were so little. They were too little.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: It was like, all of the equipment they had to use was too big and too heavy and they couldn't hack it.

Brinda: Okay, but there was a mixture of people out there once. There were Anglo crews. There were Hispanic crews.

Bob: Indian crews.

Brinda: There were Indian crews?

Bob: The Mexican crews . . . I don't know if Hispanic is exactly accurate. They're almost invariably Mexican.

Brinda: Mexican?

Bob: Like more of a national orientation. Because they'd be part Indian and part white.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: But Spanish white rather than northern European white would be the main difference, and they had a lot of Indian blood in them. They developed, with the agricultural workers -- I think Jim Holt and just kind of an anomaly, and then as conditions became worse, they took over, basically. But they were like a real minority in the early 60s even until . . . late 60s or early 70s.

Brinda: Would you say that was that because the workers, the tree planters, it was that because they were getting higher wages and so there was a demand?

Bob: No, I would say it was because the feds favored casual labor. Because the feds would say, "Okay, we need somebody here three weeks." You could send in a group of Mexicans. Whereas my crew would say, "I want to go home to my wife at night. I'm not going to go over there for three weeks; I don't care how much you pay me. I've got a good job here." And so the private lands tended to develop stable localized workforces that tend to be white with a subset of Indians and a few Mexicans and the feds tended to develop workforces that were labor crews. Where they're Russian or Mexican.

Brinda: And now on private lands we have very little labor, your saying, because it's more technology oriented?

Bob: Yeah. That's part of it, and you get lots of Mexican crews because they're the only available ones that have the skills and that. Just like you don't hire timber falling crews anymore because of the technology. You can have a certain amount of machine planting but you're going to have to hire a contractor because that's what's been left over from this whole process that's running predominantly Mexican crews. Because, at this point, it's the most efficient. Basically what we saw was, gyppo logging industry, family-owned sawmill industry, and the reforestation industry, all dry up in the late 80s, early 90s. It's not just like reforestation got affected; gyppo logging outfits, the small sawmills aren't there either.

Brinda: Right. Well they were all kind of connected, right?

Bob: Yeah.

Brinda: I mean terms of a larger economy around --

Bob: First it was the loggers. Then the sawmills. Then the reforestation workers, which it kind of makes sense because you've got to log the trees off and you got to cut them up and then after a while you run out of ground and you need to start planting trees, so.

Brinda: Right. But there's some of the private lands that do run these crews. They run them because they're the only labor force now there that . . .

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: . . . is actually skilled and experienced in this.

Bob: Right. And also because of the transition, those outfits don't have the regular money, cash flow that they did before, and we don't.

Brinda: Which outfits?

Bob: Well, the private land owners and they don't have the idea, I guess would be it, that they're going to be owning the land 30 and 40 years from now. They're seeing themselves more of ephemeral land owners because that's the pattern. Rather than long term investors.

Brinda: Okay. So how are they managing their lands? Are they?

Bob: They sell them off and then somebody comes in and says, "I don't need to be paying these people to be working 30 thousand dollars a month to be doing this kind of work. I'll just hire one crew once a year for 60 thousand dollars and save 10 months labor and have them in and out and don't have to worry about."

Brinda: Right, and are you seeing just a, in general, as a private land owner, just people moving into real estate? I mean, selling the land off to developers.

Bob: A fair amount.

Brinda: There's more, in terms of more money to be made doing that than . . .?

Bob: And more demand.

Brinda: Yep.

Bob: Yep. A lot of that. Especially around the urban areas, not so much in the rural areas, but yeah.

11. [1:55:04] Private Landowners: Industrial & Generational

Brinda: And the private land owners. Who are the big land owners right now?

Bob: There's two groups. There's industrial land owners, and that would be Weyerhaeuser, Georgia Pacific, Boise Cascade.

Brinda: They sold it, right? Boise Cascade is now like --

Bob: Well, some of them sold it to themselves, then they call themselves The Timber Company and Plum Creek. I don't know if that's the Boise people or not, or Cascade Pacific. There's different owners that come and go and that they've incorporated. They're typically publicly dealt, and they own hundreds of thousands or millions of acres of timberland. And then there's the other ones. Some people call them -- oh, I hate this acronym -- oh, man . . . it's small, non-industrial, private forest; NIPFOs. Non-Industrial Private Forest Owners. But they're the individuals and families, and there's about 25 thousand of them; but the larger amount of timber is owned by the industrial owners and then the largest amount is owned in Oregon by the federal government.

Brinda: Okay. And that's what? 50%?

Bob: 50% of land but more importantly, 80% of the timber. So when they withhold timber from the sawmills, they're withholding most of the resources of Oregon. That would be like taking the corn out of Nebraska. Or 80% of it. Or the wine grapes out of California.

Brinda: But you were saying earlier that sometimes the private industrial timber land owners prefer that because that increases their value, sort of.

Bob: Yeah. The industrial land owners don't have to compete with the federal government. Industrial usually means you also own sawmills. So you're growing wood for yourself, and if you don't have to buy that wood at a high price from the federal government, you might charge a low price from yourself to make it more competitive, more apt to corner the market and that's just what they've done. The spotted owl has made a lot of money for a lot of private land owners.

Brinda: And at the same time put a lot of the cutters and a lot of guys out of work. Is that?

Bob: The rural economies have suffered.

Brinda: Well, right, because a lot of that money was being transferred to --

Bob: Jobs.

Brinda: More, and also weren't they giving . . . Because it was so much public land in these rural areas, weren't . . . I forgot the name of the thing now, but one of those things that funneled into the schools of --

Bob: Oh, yeah. There's two of them, yeah. There's . . . with the feds, because they weren't paying taxes, there's "Payments In Lieu of Taxes," which is the PILT money, but that's only when they were not logging but, let's see . . . it was the BLM gave . . . I've got to remember here, but they gave 75% of their net income to the counties. That's one of the reasons it's so popular, and BLM is only in western Oregon, really. It's nowhere else. Most of the federal timber for BLM is in western Oregon, and so they were building roads and schools and government buildings in Josephine County and that was a major share of their revenues for lots of years. The Forest Service wasn't that generous. But I think it was 25 or 50%.

Brinda: Percentage of that . . .

Bob: It was significant.

Brinda: . . . profits from timber?

Bob: Roads and schools. And when those ended, it was devastating for rural economies. But those again, those are kind of like the real loss is the jobs. The loss of family wage earner jobs and replacement with casual labor and no work. Because that's what keeps the communities together. It's the people. It's not the road or the school building. You've got to have parents there that are saving for college and [inaudible 01:59:22] backpacks somewhere, or whatever they do. And that was the part that was missing. It just turned into food stamps and classes and government subsidies. I don't think their people ever really caught onto to how humiliating and irritating that was for all the people that had work to do.

Brinda: And what happened to a lot of these loggers?

Bob: Well, you know, there's odd . . . There's kids who committed suicide. A lot of families broke up. A lot of alcoholism. A lot of . . . now there's people like me that went to college and our families dissolved and our businesses dissolved, and we went in another career direction, and there's some people that just hung on until retirement age.

Brinda: And this is where the reforestation crews as well.

Bob: Yeah. It's the same story with those three basic groups as far as the economics and what happened at the industries and why and where. They're all the same cousins and brothers and things like that, so . . .

Brinda: And did you ever go to any of these re-training programs? These Jobs In the Woods programs? Have you heard of those?

Bob: No. I looked at them and I had friends go for a day or so look at them.

Brinda: And what did they think of them?

Bob: It was where I was making comments earlier about graduate students [Laughs] and unemployed fishermen. That's what those programs were. They were a waste of taxpayers' money. There's real work to do. Nobody is doing it, so we got kids out in the woods fiddling around earning seven bucks an hour saying they're being retrained. Trained for what? Trained to do the very jobs that we couldn't find employment to do.

Brinda: Right, and a lot of the older folks, I mean let's say not think college age kids, but folks who are in their forties and fifties who used to be loggers, and they just didn't go back to anything.

Bob: Well, or they went to town and got a job roofing, or went back to school and got a job in the post office. A lot of them just flailed. A lot of the hardline rural people that have done it for a few generations and had a land base, pretty much just batten down the hatches that got them through the 30s so they knew how to get through the 80s and 90s. A lot of deer died. [Laughs] There was a lot of poaching and stuff like that.

Brinda: And did you see a lot of folks in the reforestation . . . tree planting workforce going with the Forest Service or the BLM?

Bob: None.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: And I don't know any of them into restoration either.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: It's a lot of them went fishing, commercial fishing, logging, landscaping. So related resource-based jobs and some, like me, education that have obviously stayed focused on the basic industry. I think people persevered in spite of the federal programs. The programs were insult to injury. They weren't helpful.

Brinda: When you say programs like Jobs In the Woods and stuff?

Bob: Yeah. That was just like a joke.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: It was like, "Wow, they don't have any money to do real work, but they've got all kinds of money to waste."

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: And it's like everybody's out here having picnics or something or they think they're learning work and we . . . They're teaching the same types of jobs that one, we would be way better, way cheaper, we can't find any money for. But they'll spend 10 dollars to do a dollar's worth of work without debating whether it needs to be done or not, and then they'll all pretend like they're having an economic opportunity. They've taking people that never owned their own business and they're saying okay, we're going to create an independent contractor out of you. Well, if that person was ever going to be an independent contractor, they would have done it during the 70s or 80s when they had a chance. I don't know how many independent contractors have been created by federal government taxes but I'm guessing 0. [Laughs]

Brinda: Right.

Bob: And the contractors that they say, we got cars that need to be parked, or this or that. We've got services to do, sure. Then people will come up, but to be trained to be a entrepreneur, I don't think so.

Brinda: Right, but a lot of them, like you said, are coming up on their own because of . . . like fire, so you got a whole bunch of people coming in as independent contractors for that.

Bob: Right. Right. All you need is to have a policy of no logging and putting out fires once they start in the forest, and businesses will form. But that's getting back to the point of, why are we putting these fires out? If we're not going to log these trees, what the hell are we doing spending 130 million dollars on the Biscuit Fire? What are we trying to preserve? Yeah. That's where philosophically, I think that industry's pretty much shot its wad. I hope so. I thought so 10 years ago, and I was way wrong.

12. [2:04:43] The Environmental Industry

Brinda: Which industry?

Bob: The environmental industry. It's based on so much inefficiency, so many false assumptions, and hugely dependent on federal tax money. Might as well just be food stamps or something.

Brinda: What do you think of these Watershed Councils? Aren't there a whole bunch of these Watershed Councils that've been formed.

Bob: In Oregon.

Brinda: Who, I thought federal?

Bob: Feds support them. It's all federal money. They've gone through the State, yep. I think I mentioned them earlier, but I tend to have a caustic attitude on a lot of these things.

Brinda: That's fine.

Bob: Give me a different point of view. They already had the Soil Conservation Service, by river basins and drainages at a federal level. Now they've got it at state level, so it's what's called another layer of bureaucracy, in some places. I think they're another layer of bureaucracy. I think that the money they spend on those councils to get salmon back is like, everybody feels good, but they could all be dancing in circles around maypoles yelling for the salmon to come back and save a lot of money and have about the same result.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: I think it's government fueled, feel good, avoid the real problems kind of approach to salmon.

Brinda: This is not research related, but I'm just curious as to what do you think would be a solution, there's probably many for this, so the salmon numbers, which is I mean, objectively speaking and scientifically looking at it, one can say, salmon has decreased, right?

Bob: I don't know, I've done a lot of research on it.

Brinda: And you don't think so?

Bob: Well, coho salmon have increased a lot in the last 20 years. I fished for coho in 1982, and it was a terrible year. There are a lot of hatchery salmon, that are grown in place of natural hatches in the past, and that's the argument. It's hard to make a real quick answer on this, but a fairly quick one is, I saw a wildlife habitat map put out by the Wilderness Society, or one of those environmental groups, and they had these red areas of extensions, and they had veins next to Coastal Coho, and Clackamas Steelhead Run, and this and that.

They had a clear interpretation on them, it said all of these red areas had clearcuts. That's what they had in common. All these salmon runs don't exist anymore. That's what's called a . . . let's see, I'll think of it in a second. It's correlated, "spurious correlation." Because every one of the areas I went over with my friend, we just looked at it, here they spent, I don't know, maybe 150 thousand dollars and five years putting the map together, roughly, maybe more money than that, maybe a little bit longer.

We said, "Oh wait, that's the Long Tom Dam, that's Green Peter Dam" -- everywhere that had a red area, they'd have a giant concrete wall stopping the fish from coming up. Yes, they clearcut all those areas before they impounded them with water. The person who had looked at this clear cutting, saw these correlations, and hadn't finished their research; they went public with it. Were they ever embarrassed? No.

That's what had stopped it. They stopped the rivers, and they put in concrete walls. So, do we want to return salmon runs to those areas up above the dams? Well if we're going to, we'd probably need hatcheries or trucking or some kind of artificial maintenance. Or do we want to take the dams out and stop having electricity and irrigation. So, there's a tradeoff. We don't have elephants or sloths in the environment anymore, we don't have grizzly bears here in western Oregon. There used to be lots of them just 150 years ago.

With California Condors, we are trying to put some of them back, so it's the philosophical question of, if we want to keep salmon, we seem to know how to do it with hatcheries and fish farms and stuff, but if we want to return salmon to the spawning condition that they had 200 years ago, it's impossible. As soon as you take out the dams, now they can spawn up there, it's like okay, but now they've got to hang out in Downtown Portland or Seattle. Tell me what's the same about that? All those creeks got filled in. So, their habitat has been irrevocably changed.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: Whether they can persist in that habitat without human help, I would say they probably can, but it'd be in really diminished numbers. If we want them to persist so that we can have sport fishing and commercial fishing, it's pretty weird that we have coho, an endangered species, and a season on them. I don't know how much it costs to have each one of those killed by a commercial fisherman, or a sport fisherman, but it's a lot. Think if somebody took out a rifle and shot three spotted owls a year, it'd be crazy. Or a California Condor, it'd be . . . so it's political.

Brinda: Lots of lobbies. Okay.

13. [2:10:19] Dissertation: Forest Health & Human Health

Bob: Yep. That's probably more than enough once again, right?

Brinda: Right, I mean it's a lot, and it's so good, but I think it's sort of a lot to process.

Bob: Yep. Yep. Probably you'll find out you got way more stuff than you need for sure.

Brinda: Well, if I want to get finished with the dissertation, yes.

Bob: You gotta start cutting things.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: Have you started writing on it?

Brinda: I just started writing, and I have two draft chapters.

Bob: What's your hypothesis?

Brinda: Well, my hypothesis is that . . . well, it's sort of long and convoluted, but that the racialization of the workforce is related to changes in management practices. So it's very broad.

Bob: So it really is a lot of what we've been discussing.

Brinda: Yes, absolutely. Yeah.

Bob: Wow. That's interesting.

Brinda: The title of my dissertation, the draft title at least is . . . oh my gosh, I am so tired . . . I'll send it to you. It's not coming to me; it's one of those . . .

Bob: I can't remember my title and I worked on it for years.

Brinda: It's immigrant labor, immigrant labor and healthy forests; colon, something, something, something.

Bob: [crosstalk 02:11:47] deforestation.

Brinda: Healthy Forests is in quotes.

Bob: Okay.

Brinda: There will be a chapter on this whole healthy forests initiative.

Bob: I've got to give you one more quote then, is that still going?

Brinda: Yes.

Bob: I think a key difference, I think I said this on the phone already though, but I think it's a key difference, if we have to summarize everything; and I work with the healthy forest, healthy streams lingo a whole lot, that's why I get upset about some of these terms and take them personal. The key difference is, if it's got healthy kids playing in it, it's a healthy stream. The environmentalists will tell you, if you've got a kid playing in it, human health has got nothing to

do with it. I think the same standards that measure human health by the . . . what's the whole union of all the countries in the world called?

Brinda: The United Nations?

Bob: The United Nations. Seems like that'd be something I can remember but I never deal with them. They have standards for what are healthy human populations, low infant mortality, educational standards, I think those are the exact same standards that work very well in ecosystem health, whether it's a forest or a watershed. Presence or absence of war? That's a wonderful thing. War really degrades the environment. Dying babies? That's always bad. That's usually something with mosquitoes or something. Poorly educated workforce, while poorly educated people do all kinds of environmentally disgusting things, compared to educated people.

There're all kinds of adverse effects from having an uneducated population. High unemployment, you've got the increased poverty and associated with that is harvesting of wildlife. Illegal harvesting and marketing, and so on. So I think there's the same standards for when you get into your healthy forest definition, I'm sure if you just use human standards and measure the human population within that forest or that ecosystem, you'll come up with a surprising result.

Brinda: In terms of the forest health?

Bob: Forest health is directly related to --

Brinda: Human health?

Bob: Human health.

Brinda: Yeah, so one of the things I'd --

Bob: Human population.

Brinda: Yeah. My title, I remembered, it's called *"Hidden and the Understory: Immigrant Labor and Healthy Forests in Southern Oregon."* It's sort of the last part of the story; you know but it's --

Bob: You need to talk to Jim Holt, then, and to John Foster.

Brinda: Okay.

Bob: Because you're in the southern Oregon area, and that's where the immigrant labor movement started, probably, in reforestation, and Jim Holt in Phoenix, Oregon is the first guy I knew that ran Mexican crews.

Brinda: Right. It's an interesting point you raised about human health standards, because an interesting take on it, and one of the arguments I might want to make. At least, there's this whole community forestry movement here; a lot of the folks who advocate restoration for local communities, you always hear this thing for healthy forests equals healthy communities, right? I've heard that a lot.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: Those sorts of buzzwords. At the same time, there seems to be a hypocrisy there, because it's talked about, but then, the people doing this work are often, at least now, are often highly vulnerable, or highly exploited. A lot of that is because they're here without papers. One of my tongue-in-cheek things is, are we maintaining healthy forests, but are they really healthy communities? People aren't being talked about.

Bob: That's not tongue in cheek, it's the problem; it's the elephant in the living room exactly like --

Brinda: It's happening on federal lands, so how is the Forest Service getting those on the cheap, and how is that happening and no one talks about it, no one talks about immigrant welfare --

Bob: Except it's not cheap. They're getting the labor cheap.

Brinda: They're getting the labor cheap.

Bob: But the labor they're doing, is costing everybody a lot of money. It's not labor that pays for itself; it's getting back to the busywork problem. It's not cheap. The only ones that are getting screwed over --

Brinda: Are the workers.

Bob: Are the workers, and the communities that these workers are living in. Think about it: if the important thing is to keep a hygienic kitchen to reduce human health problems, and the way you do that is you have an illegal Nigerian lady come in, and spread Lysol everywhere, that's not a very healthy environment. That's the exact point you're getting at is the exact point I've been trying to make. They're controversial points, and they're important points. We're subjugating entire groups of people based on race. It doesn't matter if they're dead Indian people, or living Mexican people, which usually have more Indian blood in them than our American Indian populations. There's this whole privileged, white perspective on Wildernesses, and ecosystems, and healthy forests, and restoration that permeates the whole industry. The only way they're able to get away with it is federal laws, and federal land ownership.

You're seeing a pattern, sounds like you're getting it there, the feds are pretty much the ones creating this situation.

Brinda: I'm walking on very controversial ground --

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: And sort of dicey ground, because I'm revealing my cards here, and I'm just trying to go with the data, what it says, presents that.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: I'm not necessarily saying these workers are terrible and need to leave.

Bob: We had a bunch of . . . I hired a lot of Mexicans on my crew.

Brinda: I believe that I'm researching people who are contributing to the economy, paying your taxes, but because they don't have their papers . . . many of them have lived here for many, many years, and are no longer migrant workers. That's part of the story, I've got a chapter that's looking at exactly what this interview has been about, and our interview over the phone is sort of looking from the period from the 50s to the 80s. That's looking at the ARC [Associated Reforestation Workers]; that's looking at a more Anglo-based workforce, and how it was organized differently and how it started changing.

Chapter three and chapter four is going to look at more my interviews with the Latino population, and some of the workers, and those contractors, and there's a lot of internal exploitation going on there too.

Bob: Do you speak Spanish?

Brinda: I can get by.

Bob: Oh, okay.

Brinda: I also worked with a Latina RCC student, who came around and learned how to do interviews and got really passionate about this stuff.

Bob: Oh, good. Good.

Brinda: It's an interesting question, it's not necessarily saying, exposing that workforce and saying, they're terrible they have to leave, but just showing like, what are these dynamics that ends up with this highly racialized and vulnerable work force.

Bob: Looking at the workforce and saying it's terrible how they're treated. That's the bottom line.

Brinda: Looking at that. The bottom line is looking at that, but then also looking at sort of how environmentalists don't even talk about labor issues. They just talk about the trees, okay well . . .

Bob: "Naturally functioning ecosystems."

Brinda: It's just like how a lot of this takes place on federal land.

Bob: Most of it takes places on federal land.

Brinda: Just like, exposing this thing. People talk about farm work, they think automatically Hispanic labor, Latino labor. When we talk about forests, people think . . . well they might of loggers, but they think about the trees, it's just been represented differently.

Bob: It's all Caucasians.

Brinda: But it's not.

Bob: If they're looking at recreational use -- I know . . .

Brinda: Yeah, yeah.

Bob: When they're talking about recreational use, they're right.

Brinda: Yeah.

14. [2:19:45] Mexican Labor & Environmental Blinders

Bob: When they're talking about the labor, it's just like you and I are talking. There's some real transitions, and they're racial transitions. What sets us between Mexico, or Hispanics, it's kind of like Native Americans . . .

Brinda: It is Mexican. It is primarily absolutely Mexican.

Bob: It's like, I don't even know what a Hispanic is exactly. That could be an American with . . . so we've got these politically correct terms, but it's still a racial issue. Again, it's an Indian issue. The people in Mexico, of Indian heritage, are the ones that are working on the farms and coming up here.

Brinda: A lot of them.

Bob: It's not the Spanish people that are controlling the politics, and the economy. It's again, Indian people. It's the secondary racial group of Mexico that we're talking about.

Brinda: Yeah, in Mexico.

Bob: Yup.

Brinda: It's just a really interesting, fascinating issue. The thing is, once this word gets out there, right, you have no control ultimately of how it will be interpreted.

Bob: That's the scary part for you.

Brinda: Yeah, it is.

Bob: A lot of times I get interpreted as a total racist, because I'm talking about racial issues, and I'm supposed to be politically correct, because a middle-aged white person is just supposed to be . . . just like you're talking about the environmental movement, they're not even talking about it. It's institutionalized. It's so deeply embedded in them, that when you bring the topic up, it's like, repulsive.

Brinda: Or people don't want to think; you know, they're not that way.

Bob: That's the repulsive part of it. It's like, "I'm not a racist, this isn't happening, how could that be happening? It's got to be an abhorrent situation, because the forest as I know of it is a mushroom, growing out of rotting wood kind of thing," that they and their friends go out and look at in nature and photograph. But they don't see the guys out there actually piling brush, which are convicts or Mexicans.

Brinda: Right. Right, and looking at that and exposing that workforce of, once this word gets out it will be interpreted one way by an Environmental Movement, and it will definitely be interpreted by some more, maybe conservative anti-immigrant elements to society, and a way to say these people need to leave. There's all kinds of things that could happen.

Bob: A lot of it's going to depend on, even though what they say on their dissertation is, recommendations and a dollar is enough for a cup of coffee, maybe, but the recommendation to me are the most important part. They'll say it's the hard data, and demonstrating that your data's there, and it's clean, and you've organized it and you've done your job as a scientist. That's really important to do that. Then there will be a lot of people who will argue, that's the main thing you can do as a graduate student, is the data.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: But, I really think it's the insights that when you take the data, and work with it creatively, and you come to conclusions or recommendations, that's the part that's going to give you power.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: It's one thing to have the data and just say, well everybody just take it. That lack of accountability is the same problem that the Forest Service has.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: If you're accountable for it, you can make the argument right from the [Unintelligible 2:22:53]. These people are doing valuable work or wasting their time doing busy work.

Brinda: Right.

Bob: If they're doing valuable work, they need to be treated like a valuable commodity. Just the fact that you're even talking about these people is like, a shock to those people. It's like, who are these people? That's your rural jobs, that's your local economy, that's your diverse work force that you're all arguing for, you just don't want to look at what it really means.

Brinda: Well, I can see who's in your community. A lot of the local communities you live in, maybe rural Oregon, but a lot of these --

Bob: I'm an academic --

Brinda: -- the composition of these communities have changed a lot, into what is local.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: Local is settled life, but it's also still Mexicans who are both contributing to that economy, and that's not necessarily voiced by . . . I wouldn't say it's the local people who are sort of against each other, it's more that there's this [environmental] "movement" talk that's out there.

Bob: It's also urban fueled.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: It's like privileged people that probably aren't even aware of their privilege. They believe the voice of the underdog is crap; they're the voice of privilege.

Brinda: Well, you know, anyway. So that's kind of what I'm ultimately showing, is sort of that social history --

15. [2:24:12] Ecology, Sociology, Race & Economics

Bob: What's your associate, that's working on the restoration stuff?

Brinda: Well she's not, her research . . . she works for the same advisor I do.

Bob: Oh, okay.

Brinda: Her dissertation topic is . . . so we're not a tag team, but it'll be interesting to see what comes. She's looking at restoration itself. The restoration of a forest, and how a lot of the restoration industry is . . . the projects themselves are not successful, it'll be like doing . . . some of the crazy things she's done, these interviews, all this money goes into sort of creating these stream beds and stuff, but there's no water. It's like a stream bed without any water.

Bob: I'm dealing with that right now. They've got big riparian zone, it's like . . . riparian means water, there's no water there, but they're saving all this vegetation because it's ephemeral: sometimes there is water there.

Brinda: Okay, well I don't even know if there's any water in this place, she's just saying how this whole thing has been created trying to be this industry, but . . . even in terms of environmental standards or ecological standards, it doesn't seem to even make sense.

Bob: It's not scientific.

Brinda: Who is this work -- a lot of these people are more like an Anglo-workforce, she just doesn't see . . . her argument --

Bob: It sounds like she's coming out with a similar viewpoint as yours or mine its --

Brinda: Yeah, well she's saying the way the restoration workforce identifies itself, I think she's saying it's also racialized, but it's primarily through the middle class white people who are saying, we're doing high skilled restoration work, they're not even talking about Mexican workers.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: She's also saying it's sort of an industry that tries to fuel itself.

Bob: Yep.

Brinda: It's really not doing anything. She did her research up in Ukiah, near Ukiah in Northern California.

Bob: Good, good. Yup.

Brinda: You know, near Hopland, that area.

Bob: Probably there's a "First American . . ." oh, I can't think of it . . . I just found it real [crosstalk 02:26:14]

Brinda: She interviewed Watershed Councils, people doing this stuff. She's more, again, social science-y, she's looking at the narratives of restoration, how do people talk about this thing, and what does it actually mean? It'll be interesting what comes out of it.

Bob: When's she going to get it done?

Brinda: Hopefully, this summer, too.

Bob: So you're both people who can state your goals and objectives and you can actually finish them this summer, or you're --

Brinda: Oh, I think she will. I hope I can too. I have to, because I've run out of funding, and so I need to be done and find . . .

Bob: I ran out of funding, that didn't get me finished.

Brinda: Well, I need to be finished. I think she'll be done by December at the latest.

Bob: Oh, wow.

Brinda: She's tired of being a grad student as well.

Bob: You two both plan on being teachers, or researchers, or . . .

Brinda: I don't know what she wants to do, I think she might want to go into . . . you know, she's not sure yet, she's pretty young, she wants to do policy work, maybe. I wouldn't mind doing something at a community college.

Bob: Wow.

Brinda: Or teaching. I went to the Forest Service because I just moved down to Riverside, California. My husband got a job there. When I went to the Forest Service, they have a Research Station down there, I was really just kind of disheartened by some of the research they were doing in terms of . . . they were just doing surveys. Social science surveys of how people interpret signs in the forest, I'm not really . . . well, we'll see I don't --

Bob: I'm putting out proposals for the Pacific Northwest Research Station to Oregon State, just so I can get a reasonable project together. Because, they've had their funding cut back so much that they've just turned into --

Brinda: The Research Station?

Bob: Yeah, all the Research Stations, they won't let the Forest Service do any research. The Forest Service doesn't have many to monitor, they'll make the big, massive, expensive decisions but only in context of if they're fighting a wildfire or something.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: It's a little bit bizarre, but I'm really glad you're doing what you're doing, and I'm glad your friend's doing what she's doing.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: You're coming up with really critical insights --

Brinda: Right.

Bob: -- that you're finding out aren't shared by hardly anybody. Even people that are right next to the ground that are in the Environmental Movement stuff, are not sharing your perspective.

Brinda: It's a good thing to talk to you about that, because when we get in our little critical thing, I start thinking like, everyone must see this. The whole restoration thing, I was saying, well aren't people seeing that -- and you're like no, they're saying something completely different. As you're thinking critically and analyzing this, I get these sort of blinders on, not blinders but you start thinking well, isn't this evident? Everyone must see that it's there, but they don't, and I forget that.

Bob: The one thing I've found with the Environmental Movement, is that it's a lot of urban kids, most of them have come into in the last 10 or 15 years. They've haven't grown up there, multi-generations, they really don't understand the workforce, they don't even understand the context we're talking in, who's actually doing the work, how's that related to what kind of policy --

Brinda: Right.

Bob: -- created that kind of job. There's a self-assurance there, and they just out of things. I've been to a couple public meetings at the last [inaudible 02:29:29] so this isn't . . . recent experience reaffirms, it's not only do they act like they know more than they really know about ecology or the history or economics; they act like, a lot of them, like they know more than is humanly possible to know. It's like, all of a sudden they're talking about fungus, and they're talking about labor things, and they're talking about fire suppression, and it's a little bit annoying. It's like they're really brilliant people; except they're just [inaudible 2:30:01] to me. That's been kind of a problem I've had. I used to think they were well intentioned, but they just needed better information, then I came to the conclusion that's not it. They reject better information, they're pretty much self-serving people that have their own agendas, that have a combined vision or viewpoint that is common to them all, but they might as well Rajneeshees**,** or I don't know, Mormons on a mission or something. They've got something driving them -

Brinda: Right, I mean --

Bob: It's not history, and it's not logic, and it's not resource management, and it's not economics.

Brinda: Yeah.

Bob: There's a large dose of racism there, and they're just oblivious to it.

Brinda: Right. Well thank you for that fantastic interview, which I'm going to have to listen to again and again --

Bob: Uh oh, I'm sorry.

Brinda: No, no, it'll be great.

Bob: Only because you're interested!

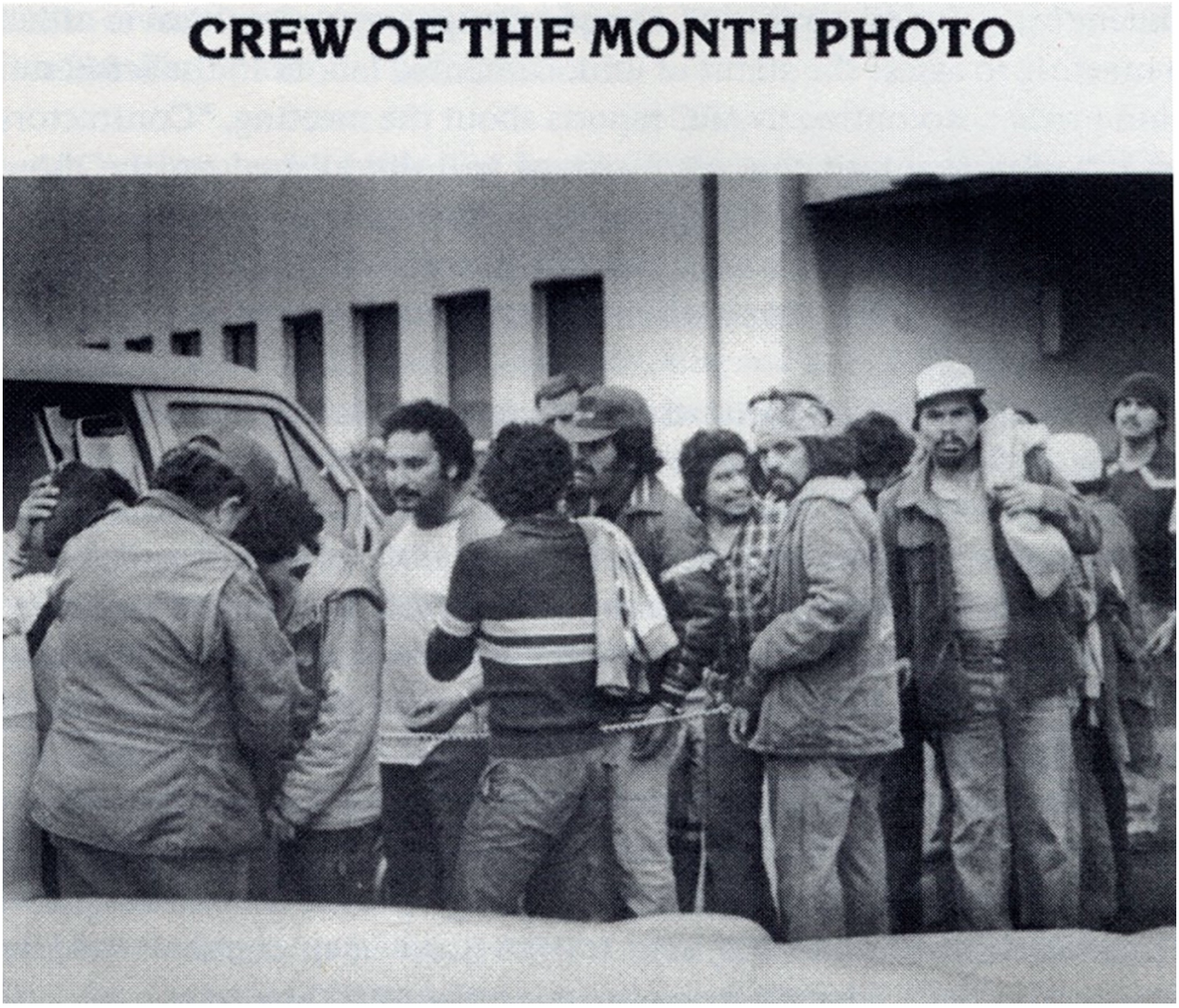


Figure 2.8 "Crew of the Month." Undocumented Latino forest workers being arrested by Immigration and Naturalization Service officer. Siuslaw National Forest, Waldport Ranger District, OR. Source: *Newport News Times* staff photo, reprinted in *ARC Quarterly* (Winter 1982): 19. (Sarathy 2012: 44).